■ ENTERTAINMENT / A2-1

5 weeks before Big Day, Lea says It's going to be a girl

■ BUSINESS / B1

Professionals evade payment of P25.5B in taxes a year

■ WORLD / A26

US stepping up plans to attack Iran, newspaper reports

■ BUSINESS / B10

What (and why) people are buying at 'ukay-ukay' all over the country

Rolling Stones rocks to China's satisfaction

ANO KAYANG SASABIHIN NI MAO?

SHANGHAI—AFTER nearly 30 years of trying, the world's most famous rock band finally made it to the world's largest country, as the Rolling Stones brought their show to a small stage in China's biggest city.

ROLLING/ A8

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, April 10, 2006 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 123 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Travelers advised: Be at airport 3 hours early

By Nikko Dizon

AIRPORT SECURITY IS BEING TIGHTENED AND the authorities' advice to travellers who plan to spend the Holy Week in the provinces is: Come three hours before your flight to avoid any hassles.

Yesterday, the old Manila domestic airport was crowded with passengers, causing heavy traffic on Domestic Road.

TRAVELERS/ A8

GMA allies to devote Holy Week to Cha-cha

Tell CBCP to respect 'people's initiative'

By Michael Lim Ubac and Leila B. Salaverria

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo's congressional allies yesterday warned Catholic Church leaders to stay away from politics and said lawmakers would spend their Lenten holidays campaigning for the shift to the parliamentary system.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles reacted sharply to criticism over the weekend by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and constitutional expert Fr. Joaquin Bernas of the "people's initiative" as a mode for Charter change (Cha-cha).

The CBCP said in a pastoral letter on Friday that the administration-backed effort was "dangerously unclear and open to manipulation." Bernas on Saturday said that without an enabling law, the initiative was an "insult" to the Supreme Court, which had required this in a ruling in 1997.

Nograles said that the House majority respected the bishops' view but reminded them that the move to amend the 1987 Constitution was a "purely political" exercise and thus beyond the realm of religious leaders under the principle of separation of Church and state.

He urged the CBCP to respect the people's initiative as an expression of the "people's will."

"We shall to the best of our

GMA ALLIES/ A22

CONFESOR Bautista, 78, who fought during World War II, puts on his medal before the arrival of President Macapagal-Arroyo at Mt. Samat in Bataan for the commemoration of the 64th Araw ng Kagitingan.

EDWIN BACASMAS

₱1B in benefits for war veterans released

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk
and Christine O. Avendaño

MT. SAMAT, PILAR, BATAAN—AT the Araw ng Kagitingan rites, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday announced the release of P1 billion to Filipino World War II veterans.

Ms Arroyo shared the news with some 3,000 veterans, their relatives and government officials gathered here to honor the heroism of Filipino soldiers during the war.

The amount would partially settle arrears on old age, death and disability pensions, and education benefits, the President said.

In administrative disabilities alone, the government owes the veterans at least P20 billion, according to retired Commodore Rogelio Dayan, administrator of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO).

"Our fiscal reforms also enable us now to start paying our nation's debts to our veterans and the orphans of our heroes who now rest in peace, not only in words, not only in memorial ceremonies like today but also in concrete materi-

P1B IN BENEFITS/ A22

Like Pope, Rosales under shadow of predecessor

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

A WEARY FLOTSAM OF 60 MILlion Filipino Catholics is cast adrift in a sea of political uncertainty in the search for direction from their religious leaders as they contemplate this week the Passion of Christ.

They have a new cardinal, Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, who on March 24 was bestowed his red hat by Pope Benefict XVI at a consistory at the Vatican.

In succeeding the late Jaime Cardinal Sin as archbishop of Manila on Nov. 21, 2003, Rosales inherited the heavy legacy of the most politically influential and powerful Filipino prelate in the postwar history of the country.

There is a double irony in Rosales's induction. Both he and Pope Benedict XVI had entered their high ecclesiastical offices under the shadow of two towering Church personalities—Cardinal Sin in the case of Rosales and Pope John Paul II in the case of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

At the first anniversary of the death of Pope John Paul on April 2, St. Peter's Square resounded with calls for a fast-tracking of the sainthood of John Paul, as Pope Benedict recalled, to the roar of the more than one million Catholics who packed the square, that the late Pontiff had "left a deep mark on the history of the Church and of humanity."

Both Rosales and Pope Benedict XVI are trying to move out of the enormous shadows of their charismatic predecessors and are leading their flock in a period of profound transition in doctrinal policy in the Vatican and in the uneasy relations between Church and State in the Philippines, rocked by political crisis.

In trying to fill the huge vacuum left by Sin, Rosales is shackled by two handicaps:

First, the Philippine Catholic

LIKE POPE/ A8

54-year-old 'senakulo' shuns 'Da Vinci Code'

By Volt Contreras

FOR GENERATIONS, A *SENAKULO* troupe in Barangay Buting, Pasig City, has preserved its 54-year-old play on the life and passion of Jesus Christ, a libretto that has made room for some narrative "enticements" meant to enhance the Gospel message while keeping the audience from yawning.

The enticements include the "prophetic" encounter between the Child Jesus and the young bully Judas Iscariot, and the depiction of Dimas (the repentant thief crucified next to Christ) as one of the former suitors of Mary Magdalene.

But there's one deviation from the script, which the actors and crew of the Original Samahang Nazareno (Osana) cannot permit, a taboo subject that has alarmed their elders as they go onstage for another week-long production.

"That Da Vinci Code movie should be banned here," said Osana officer-in-charge Babylyn Tero, a retired university professor who is cast in this year's show as "Marta Defensora," a sort of defense counsel for Jesus when he faces Caiphas.

The mother of two said she was personally worried that the Hollywood film, which is based on Dan Brown's international bestseller and set for release in May, might "have an effect on our youth and on Filipinos of shallow faith."

"It's scandalous, almost a sabo-

54-YEAR-OLD/ A22

Age of 'Judas' Gospel' text crucial point

NEW YORK—THE TALE OF HOW the "Gospel of Judas" was rediscovered is worthy of a detective novel, but there is an even more tantalizing religious mystery—whether the newly released document tells us anything authentic about either Jesus or Judas.

Instead of Judas as the sinister betrayer, the Egyptian Coptic text issued on Thursday portrays Judas as Jesus's confidant, chosen to be told spiritual secrets that the other apostles were not. Jesus also asks Judas to hand him over to his enemies, a possible elaboration on a New Testament phrase in which Jesus tells Judas: "What you are going to do, do quickly" (John 13:27).

AGE/ A8

PALM fronds are blessed by the parish priest of Sta. Cruz, Manila, on Palm Sunday, which marks the start of the Holy Week observance.

RYAN LIM

Fasting for Catholics, feasting for Muslims

By Christian V. Esguerra

WHILE THE COUNTRY'S MAINLY Roman Catholic population observes the passion of Christ this Holy Week, the Muslim minority will have a commemoration of its own—a weeklong celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth.

In a manner of speaking, Muslims will have—as one scholar put it—a feast, while Catholics will fast.

"This is a very good sign. Imagine Catholics and Muslims having parallel religious celebrations. I hope this signals more peace and unity between us," Taha Basman, an Islamic scholar, said in an interview Saturday night.

This year's "Maulidan Nabi" (Birth of the Prophet) takes an interesting turn as it falls on the holiest period in the Christian calendar, said Basman.

It is celebrated during the 10th day of the third month (*rabiul awal*) of the Muslims' *hijrah* calendar, he said.

Basman, 54, has been a key figure in interfaith circles for more than two decades. He runs the Center for Moderate Muslims, which helps educate the local Muslim population on the dangers of Islamic extremism.

The Muslim celebration comes in the wake of the worldwide controversy generated by the publication of Muhammad caricatures in the European press.

This is the best time to show how much the Filipino Muslims love the Prophet, says Basman.

At the Muslim community in

FASTING/ A22

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will continue to experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/04/09/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

No stopping Charter change–JDV

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN JACINTO, PANGASINAN—TWO PARALLEL moves aimed at accomplishing the same goal will make the change to a parliamentary form of government a certainty, a confident Speaker Jose de Venecia has declared.

De Venecia said yesterday that aside from the people's initiative which seeks to junk the presidential form in favor of a parliamentary system through the signatures of registered voters, the House of Representatives was only shy a few votes to make the convening of a constituent assembly possible.

"We now have 181 or 182 signatures [supporting a constituent assembly]. We're only short by 13 or 14 votes before we get the final 195 votes needed. If it is the people's initiative that comes first, we will go by the decision of the people," the Speaker told reporters here.

He said that although the proposed constitutional changes, especially the shift to a parliamentary form of government, were being opposed by various sectors, "in the end it will be God's blessing and the voice of the Filipino people that will decide" the matter.

"It will not be the congressmen, not the mayors, not the barangay captains, not the bishops, not the priests, not the ministers, not the evangelists, but the Filipino people who will make the final decision (to amend the 1987 Constitution)."

De Venecia visited this town and other areas in Pangasinan's fourth district on Sunday to explain to his constituents the constitutional amendments the administration is seeking.

But Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz warned that a "big socio-political upheaval" would occur if the "dubious people's initiative succeeds and in the event that Charter change pushes through."

"This is because the opposition and the many institutions, organizations and movements having the same sentiments… would not take such an initiative lying down," Cruz said in a statement posted in his blog (www.ovc.blogspot.com) on Sunday.

"If they are now already inflamed by the many charges and different accusations against the administration, it could be well expected that they would be the more incensed by the actuality of a change in the charter of the nation—for dubious reason," he said.

And in Bacolod City, Bishop Vicente Navarra disclosed in a pastoral letter read in churches that some people signed the petition seeking Charter change because they were paid to do so.

"This is an unjust move of the government to make people sign something they do not even understand," the bishop of Bacolod said.

Navarra said that Congress needed to pass implementing guidelines before the administration could change the 1987 Constitution through a people's initiative. Despite the absence of the requirement, he added, the administration continued to deceive the people into signing the "fake" people's initiative.

"For the Church, the painful injustice is when ignorant and simple people are used to manipulate and pursue the vested interests of those in power," he said.

On Saturday, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno raised the same theme as De Venecia in Isabela, saying that there was still hope that constitutional changes would push through even if the people's initiative failed to get rolling.

Puno said it was only a matter of time before congressmen and senators realized the need to amend the Constitution through a constituent assembly.

"Who knows, our congressmen and senators [opposing Charter change] will change their minds and push instead for a constituent assembly," he said.

"If the people's initiative will be affirmed by the Comelec and approved in a plebiscite, that is okay. But the constituent assembly may also be a way [to change the Constitution]," he said.

Puno said Malacañang was not behind the people's initiative.

"I do not know why the [political] opposition never believes us," he said. *With reports from Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau, and Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Pro-Cha-cha signatures submitted this week

ILOILO CITY—THE PHILIPPINE Councilors League (PCL) and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap) will submit to the Commission on Elections this week some eight to 12 million signatures of voters supporting the people's initiative to change the Constitution.

Carlo Pontico Fortuna, national president of the PCL and secretary general of Ulap, said both groups will meet today to assess the exact number of signatures gathered.

Fortuna said PCL and Ulap were confident of getting the 12 million signatures, which should be enough for Comelec to begin verifying the signatures.

But Fortuna, a councilor of Mandaue City in Cebu, said they expected opposition to the petition.

"We should not block the people's initiative so that when it eventually goes to the Supreme Court, it can take a second look and make a legal decision," he said.

In Cebu City, proponents of the people's initiative were able to gather signatures from 14 percent of the voters in the north district and another 11.19 percent in the south district.

"It already surpassed the 3 percent requirement, but for me the figure is not tremendous. But if I had participated in the campaign, we can even get 30 to 40 percent signatures in my district", Rep. Antonio Cuenco said.

In Eastern Samar, Gov. Ben Evardone said the Comelec finished on Friday the verification of 65,615 signatures, representing 30.43 percent of the province's 216,103 registered voters.

But in Zambales, a number of pro-Charter change signatures were reportedly fake. *Hazel P. Villa, Joey A. Gabieta and Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau and Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Davide gives GMA list of poll reforms

By Christine O. Avendaño

RETIRED CHIEF JUSTICE HILARIO Davide Jr. has proposed several electoral reforms to President Macapagal-Arroyo, including possible amendments to the Constitution, just in case the move for Charter change succeeds.

"The comprehensive report deals not only with operations of the Commission on Elections but also covers possible amendments to the Constitution and proposed congressional amendments to the Omnibus Election Code," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in his "View from the Palace" column yesterday.

"It also proposes executive initiatives to improve public awareness about the [people's] role in bringing about credible and meaningful elections," he said of Davide's report.

The former chief justice made the report following his designation by the President as her adviser on electoral reforms late last year.

Davide's report comes at a time the signature drive or a people's initiative to amend the 1987 Constitution is in full swing by groups known to be allies of Ms Arroyo.

In his column, Bunye said the implementation of the recommendations of Davide would lead to "credible and honest elections at all times and in all levels, as well as a more educated and vigilant voting population."

According to Bunye, Davide recommended the following amendments:

- Fix the term of office of members of the House of Representatives and provincial, city and municipal elective officials to four years.
- De-synchronize the elections and hold national and local elections on different dates.
- Ban the appointment of elective local officials and members of the House of the Representatives to any public office during the term they were elected.
- Ban the appointment of senators to any public office within three years from their election for a particular term.
- Prohibit political dynasties (a clear definition of which should already be made instead of it being left to Congress), and to provide harsh sanctions for violations.
- Prohibit elective public officials from changing their party affiliation during the term they were elected and provide harsh sanctions for violations.
- Adopt certain electoral reforms proposed by the Consultative Commission such as developing the party system, developing two major political parties, providing financial assistance to the political parties on the basis of their share of the votes cast, and prohibiting financial contributions from foreign governments.

Pimentel airs warning on global warming

By TJ Burgonio

SENATE MINORITY LEADER Aquilino Pimentel Jr. frets that the two-horsepower air-conditioner, even at full blast, can "hardly cool" his small office nowadays, no thanks to the scorching heat—and global warming.

"Global warming is upon us," he said in an interview yesterday.

Noting that the heat waves and climatic changes in the country were linked to this phenomenon, Pimentel pressed the government to educate the public on the "perils of global warming," and prepare them for a shift to alternative sources of fuel.

"The perils of global warming have to be communicated to the people in a language understandable to them," he said, even as he proposed that the fund for the administration-backed Charter change should be realigned for this purpose.

For starters, the Senate could serve as a forum for the dissemination of ideas like this so people would understand "what climatic change is all about and what can be done about it," the senator said.

"Otherwise, they would remain uncaring and unconcerned," he added.

The Feb. 17 landslide that buried Guinsaugon village in Leyte and killed over 1,000 residents, the flash floods that hit many parts of northern Mindanao since 1999, and the heat waves in Manila merely highlighted the need for government to act fast against global warming, Pimentel said.

Climatic change was being experienced elsewhere in the world, he said, citing Time magazine's April 2 issue which reported that global warming killed wildlife in the United States, Australia and other parts of the globe, and devastated farms and homes, and poisoned water sources.

Some 2,000 leading scientists, who contributed to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, had predicted that by 2100, the Earth's average temperature would climb between 1.5 degrees and 6 degrees Celsius, the senator said.

While 94 years away from 2100, the scientists reported that ice sheets and glaciers in Greenland and in the Antarctic were melting at a rate much faster than usual, he added.

Pimentel also dared the government to take steps to prepare the country to shift from its heavy dependence on gasoline and crude oil to alternative sources of energy, like ethanol, and to tap the Department of Science and Technology to develop independent technology to fight global warming.

"We have to do our share to shift from our dependence on fossil fuels to alternative sources of energy, called green energy," he said.

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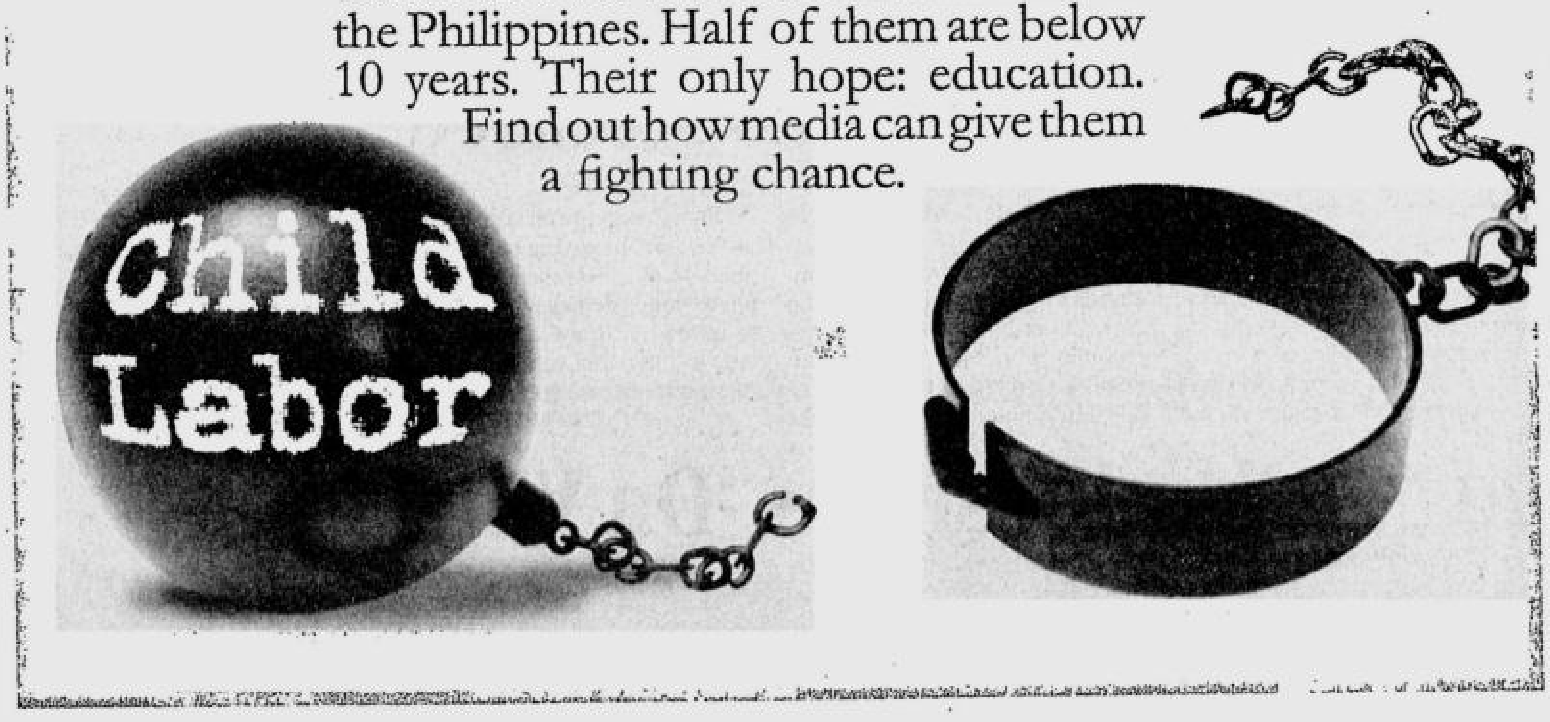

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KABAYAN INTRODUCES 'KABAYAN'
Vice President Noli de Castro introduces US Ambassador Kristie Anne Kenney to Kabayan, the preserved Philippine eagle that was the first to be bred in captivity and released in the wild in the country, during her recent courtesy call on De Castro. OVP PHOTO BY EGAY MONTANA

US envoy chokes up during Bataan speech

By Christine O. Avendaño

MT. SAMAT, BATAAN—US AMBASSADOR Kristie Kenney had every reason to choke up with emotion as she spoke yesterday about the "valor and courage" of Filipino and American soldiers who fought side by side here during the World War II.

Attending the Araw ng Kagitingan rites at the memorial cross here with President Macapagal-Arroyo, Kenney couldn't help but be emotional after disclosing that three of her relatives had fought in and survived the war.

These were her father, father-in-law and a cousin, the latter, Kenney said, who was among the thousands who surrendered to Japanese forces in this province on that fateful day of April 9, 1942, and took part in the "Death March."

At least 5,000 Filipinos and more than 600 Americans died in the Death March from Mariveles, Bataan, to Capas, Tarlac, while thousands more died of starvation, disease and brutality during the first few weeks in the prisoner-of-war camp. *(See related story on Page A1.)*

"The generation that fought here all of you have called very rightly, the greatest generation," said Kenney, as she noted that everyone who was there yesterday came with "great pride" to honor the valor of the soldiers.

"And (we have) great pride in the heroism of the people of this land, whose action saved lives then and throughout the terrible conflict," the US ambassador said in a speech delivered near the Dambana ng mga Bayani.

The rites saw Kenney joining Ms Arroyo in a wreath-laying ceremony at the monument in the presence of Filipino war veterans and their families. A Philippine Air Force helicopter dropped rose petals and a bell tolled to remember those who fought in the war.

During World War II, Kenney said her late father, Jerry Kenney, was on a ship in the Pacific while her father-in-law, Gen. Albert Brownfield, "landed on the beaches of Normandy."

"And my cousin (Sonny Brownfield) was a young captain in the Marine Corps when he surrendered here 64 years ago," she said.

She said that the three men "lived through the war" and that they "lived to go home and build peace and raise families."

"We owe them a great debt as we stand together as partners again—members of democratic nations joined by our sister Japan and other nations," she said.

Her voice choked after speaking about "this most, most dignified of monuments and an extremely beautiful land."

"It is for me very emotional and special to say Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! Long live the Philippines!" Kenney said.

To reporters later, she said she lost her father recently while her cousin died 10 years ago.

Her father-in-law, on the other hand, is now 92 "and still farming in western Texas," she said.

"It's an incredible honor for me to be here," Kenney said as she told reporters that this was the first time she had set foot in Bataan.

It was also "incredibly special" to honor the memory of her cousin here, she added.

Kenney, who arrived recently, said it had been a "wonderful two and a half weeks," and described Filipinos as "fabulous."

In her speech, Kenney said it was peacetime but "it's a peace that we must work to maintain."

"We face today threats of terrorism and of violence, those who would take away our opportunity to live in peace and freedom. We face the threat of poverty, we face the threat that our citizens may not have a bright future," she said.

Kenney called on everyone to remember the "great sacrifices of those who fought here" as well as to ensure "our children's world is more peaceful and prosperous."

'Calvary of urban poor' starts today

TIE A BLACK RIBBON 'ROUND THE old electric post if you're hungry, homeless or jobless.

The ribbons—serving as grim reminders of poverty—signal the start today of Kalbaryo ng Maralitang Tagalungsod, a special Holy Week observance of the urban poor led by the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay).

Kadamay, which holds the annual *Kalbaryo* depicting the plight of the poor, is also scheduled to stage *Pasyon* under the Aurora-Sta. Mesa Bridge in Manila at 10 a.m.

The *Pasyon*'s words had been changed to the litany of woes of impoverished families, the poor's campaign for higher wages and a new government. It will be read by Kadamay chair Carmen Deunida.

"*Kalbaryo* serves as a gathering of the poor from different urban centers to show their sufferings to the rest of the country and protest the worsening poverty, violence and oppression," Deunida said in a statement yesterday.

The main theme of this year's *Kalbaryo* is the campaign for P125 across-the-board wage hike and the fight against curtailment of civil rights. *Blanche S. Rivera*

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Iloilo fights rice bugs

ILOILO CITY—THE provincial government has released P200,000 for a campaign to stop the spread of the Rice Black Bug (RBB).

The bugs spread to two more villages in the northern Iloilo town of Balasan—Ipil and Tingui-an.

So far, more than 1,000 hectares have been invaded by the bugs, which eat the base of rice stems and weaken the plants.

The RBB infestation was first reported in the villages of Pinantan, Elizalde and Pinantan Diel on March 4, where 23 hectares of rice farms were damaged.

Zafiro Palabrica, provincial agriculturist, said the P200,000 would be used to buy 16 light traps at P3,500 each and 10 generator sets at P10,000 per unit.

About P44,000 of the amount will be used for the transportation and other expenses of 29 agricultural technicians.

The provincial agricultural office said the presence of just 10 bugs per hill could lead to losses of 15-23 percent of harvests.

Hazel P. Villa, PDI Visayas Bureau

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Party-list groups to lose seats in parliamentary gov't, says lawmaker

By Norman Bordadora

A MILITANT PARTY-LIST LEGISLATOR has raised the specter of the impending demise of party-list representation in Congress if and when the country switches over to a parliamentary form of government from the current presidential setup.

Anak Mindanao Rep. Mujiv Hataman told reporters late last week that no less than Speaker Jose de Venecia had told him that party-list groups may have to ally themselves with the bigger political parties in order to have a vehicle for their constituencies.

Hataman said De Venecia seemed to have a preference for the German model of sectoral representation in the would-be parliament. This model supposedly has a place in parliament for dominant political parties, not minor political groups.

"It's over. There'll no longer be party-list representation in the parliamentary government," Hataman said in Filipino.

There are at present 16 party-list groups in the House represented by 24 members. The number of seats a group may have in the House is determined by the number of votes it gets in national elections.

HATAMAN PDI PHOTO

The groups with the most number of representatives are Bayan Muna and Akbayan which both mustered enough votes to sit three members each—the maximum number a party-list group may have under the Constitution.

Hataman said De Venecia told him the party-list groups would need to merge with the big political parties like the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats.

"When we join the huge political parties, we'll all the more be marginalized and we'll no longer be heard. The Speaker told me it would still be the majority that will have its way in a big political party," Hataman said.

"Already, we're having difficulty getting heard. How much more if we'll be in a parliament without party-lists," he said.

While their lot are almost always outvoted by the majority in the House, party-list representatives in the minority are some of the most active and aggressive critics of the Arroyo administration in the halls of Congress.

It is believed some party-list groups have so affected the President she has branded some of them, particularly Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela, "legal communists."

With this development, Hataman said he was considering running for parliament in his congressional district in Basilan in 2007.

De Venecia is confident an interim Parliament could be in place by July with the current congressmen and senators as members until 2007.

In 2007, the first election for members of parliament will be held, while 12 senators will become automatic members of the new legislature until 2010, according to the schedule set by House leaders.

Survey says Erap 'best person to lead country'

By Nelson F. Flores

FORMER PRESIDENT JOSEPH Estrada is the "best person to lead the country now," a survey conducted nationwide last month by Pulse Asia showed.

Estrada, who is detained on plunder and perjury charges in Tanay, Rizal, got a national rating of 22 percent against the 11 percent of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Former Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, Estrada's spokesperson, said the results were "not surprising" as the former President, despite his many years in detention, remained popular and "highly trusted" by a majority of the Filipino people.

Dilangalen noted that an earlier Pulse Asia survey on trust ratings of different political leaders already showed President Estrada's trust rating zooming to 48 percent.

He pointed out that the survey results under the category of "best person to lead the country" also "disproves with finality" Malacañang's claim that there is "no viable alternative" to Ms Arroyo.

"That [Malacañang] claim is empty. Of course there is an alternative to Gloria. Estrada is the best alternative. The survey shows it," Dilangalen said.

He disclosed that Estrada was elated over the positive rating he obtained in the March Pulse Asia survey and was "grateful" that the masses had not "forgotten him" and continued to trust him.

"President Estrada said he was 'humbled' by the continued trust the Filipino people have given him and expressed his gratitude to the masses that continue to hold him in high esteem," Dilangalen said.

According to the survey, the detained leader obtained the highest rating from Mindanao respondents at 33 percent. He got 24 percent from Luzon, 14 percent from the National Capital Region (NCR) and 12 percent from the Visayas.

Among the socioeconomic classes, Estrada obtained the highest rating from the E class at 31 percent, followed by the D class at 20 percent. The ABC classes only gave him 4 percent.

It is a well-known fact that Estrada's constituents are the masses who comprise the bulk of the Philippine population.

In last month's Pulse Asia survey, Estrada had the highest trust rating of 48 percent, despite being detained on plunder and perjury charges.

In the same survey, Ms Arroyo's trust rating for March 2006 was 22 percent, while her distrust rating was 50 percent.

Other political leaders who topped the Pulse Asia survey were Sen. Panfilo Lacson at 18 percent, former President Corazon Aquino with 16 percent, while actress and Fernando Poe Jr. widow Susan Roces got 14 percent.

Former President Fidel Ramos was found acceptable by only 8 percent, while evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva got the nod of 6 percent of respondents.

Based on past Pulse Asia surveys, Estrada's trust rating has been rising since 1999. In December 1999, his trust rating was 39 percent, in 2000, it was 43 percent then it slipped to 29 percent after his ouster in 2001.

In 2002, Estrada's trust rating was 33 percent, in 2003 and 2004, 30 percent. In July 2005, it rose to 40 percent, then slipped to 39 percent in October. Last month it zoomed to 48 percent.

Senate won't be rushed into passing budget–Nene

By TJ Burgonio

PIMENTEL PDI PHOTO

SENATE MINORITY LEADer Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. yesterday urged his colleagues not to yield to Malacañang's mounting pressure to rush the passage of the P1.04-trillion 2006 budget, warning that it could contain some "hidden items."

"We will not be rushed into approving it," Pimentel said in an interview.

Pimentel said that senators would fully review "hidden items" that might have been inserted into the budget in the House of Representatives.

He said he had directed his staff to secure a copy of the House-approved budget bill, which adopted Malacañang's proposal in toto, and to scrutinize the measure while Congress is in recess.

Senators Sergio Osmeña III and Alfredo Lim had earlier indicated that they would oppose moves by congressmen to restore their Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) or their so-called pork barrel from P40 million to the original P70 million.

Osmeña and Lim also rejected proposals for senators to restore their own pork barrel from P120 million to its old level of P200 million.

"We will not agree. I will not vote for that. I would rather put it in school buildings and farm-to-market roads," Osmeña said, pointing out that it was wiser for government to allot more funds for these much-needed infrastructure.

Pimentel also expressed his chagrin over Malacañang's call for the Senate to expedite approval of the budget after the House delayed the passage of the bill for nearly five months.

"It looks as if they want to make it appear that if we do not yet have an approved budget by now, that is the fault of the Senate. That's unfair," he said in a statement.

Since the bill has not been officially transmitted to the upper chamber, Pimentel suggested that the Senate finance committee conduct hearings during the recess after the Holy Week to offset the delay in the submission.

The committee is chaired by Sen. Manuel Villar Jr.

After months of delay, the House finally approved the budget Tuesday night, a day before Congress adjourned for its Holy Week break. Pending its approval, the government has been operating on the 2005 reenacted budget.

Pimentel said the Senate needed the last two weeks of May and the whole month of June to approve the budget. Congress will resume sessions on May 15.

"There's nothing unusual about that. Had they transmitted the budget to us by mid-November last year, we would have passed it by the end of December," he said.

Villar had accused the House of deliberately delaying the budget's approval so the administration could use the reenacted budget to fund its campaign to amend the 1987 Constitution through a people's initiative or a constituent assembly.

Pimentel agreed with Villar's view and said that a reenacted 2005 budget would virtually become the pork barrel of President Macapagal-Arroyo who would have full discretion on how to reallocate the funds for projects already completed during the previous year.

"The President will be free to realign billions of pesos under the reenacted budget—euphemistically called savings—to projects or activities that catch her fancy. That is why they are saying there is money for the plebiscite on Charter amendments even if no funds are allocated under the 2006 national budget for such political exercises," he said.

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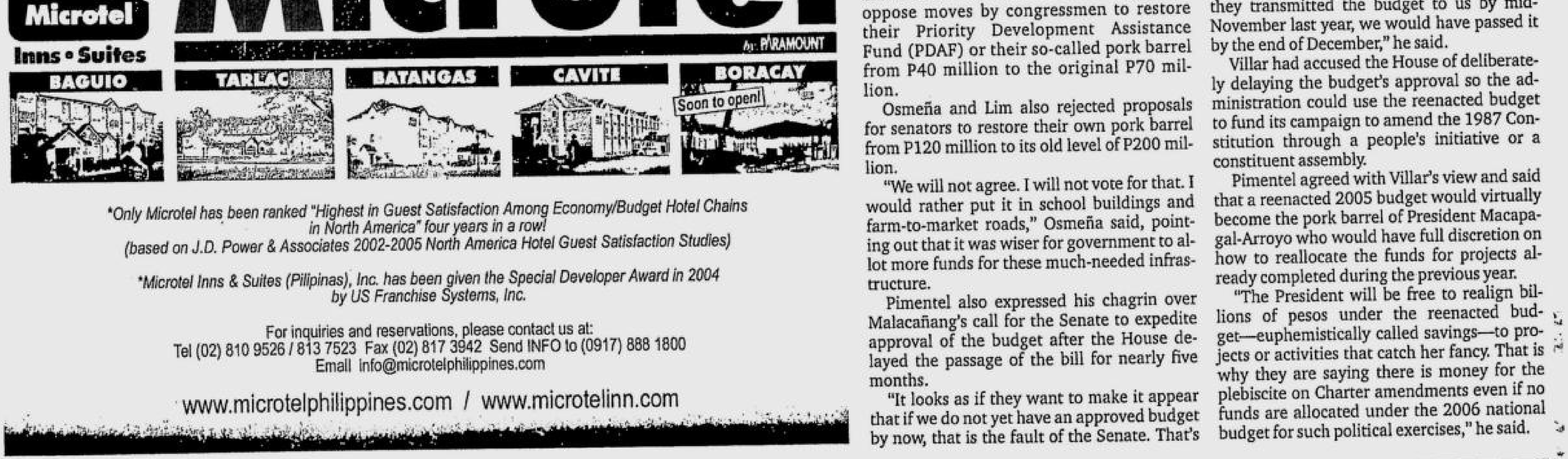
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How to keep your workers up at meet

THE STRATEGIES BEING ADOPTED BY Philippine companies to maintain their competitiveness despite the poaching of their high-skill talent by domestic and overseas competitors will be the major topic in the 27th National Conference of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (NCE).

This was announced by Rene Y. Soriano, Employers Confederation of the Philippines (Ecop) president, and Cesar Mario O. Mamon, NCE organizing committee chair. The conference will be held on May 22-23 at Manila Hotel on the theme "Survive, Compete and Succeed."

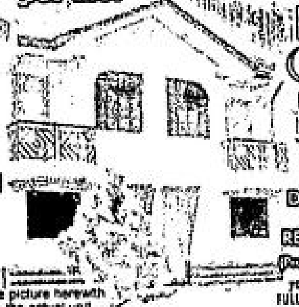
Soriano and Mamon said chief executive officers will interact with colleagues on programs to recruit, develop and retain highly skilled talent.

Managers in several industries affected by the brain drain will discuss their plans to ensure that their core operations would not be derailed by the hemorrhage of talent.

Ecop officials expect the hemorrhage to worsen in the next 5-10 years to replace the substantial numbers of workers in the US, Canada, Europe and Asia who are approaching retirement age.

Ecop will submit a resolution on the issue to President Macapagal-Arroyo when she addresses the annual conference. Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas will also deliver a speech.

Interested parties may call the Ecop secretariat at 890-5005 and 899-0411 (locals 103 and 117). Or they can e-mail nce27@ecop.org.ph.



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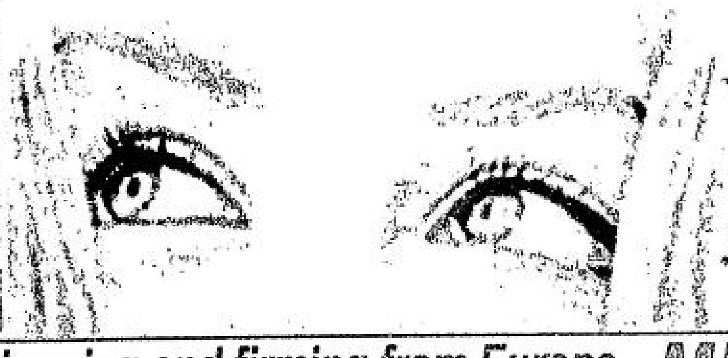

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OPTIMISTIC. Malaysia Deputy Defense Minister Dato Hj Zainal Abidin Bin Hj Zin (left) gestures during a meeting Sunday with Southern Command chief Maj. Gen. Gabriel Habacon in Zamboanga City. Malaysia, which is brokering the peace talks between the Philippine government and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front, expressed optimism that both sides would be able to sign an accord before the end of the year. AFP

Militant workers fear terror bill to be used against them

By Leila B. Salaverria

A MILITANT LABOR GROUP HAS expressed fears that the antiterrorism bill passed recently by the House of Representatives will be used to crack down on protesting workers.

The Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) said the administration could use the bill to go after labor leaders who criticize, protest and call for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

According to the APL, the bill was too ambiguous and too broad, claiming that the provisions on what's considered illegal could be used against the labor leaders.

Illegal acts

Among the acts the bill prescribes as illegal are:

- Threatening or causing serious risk to the health or safety of the public
- Threatening or causing substantial damage or wanton destruction
- Resorting to arson against critical infrastructure or property, public or private
- Causing serious or unlawful interference or disruption of an essential service, facility or system, whether public or private
- Hijacking or threatening to hijack any kind of craft, electric or railroad train.

In a statement, the APL said the bill could be used to harass union leaders during labor disputes that could end in physical confrontation.

Refuge

"For instance, should deadlocked CBA negotiations be deemed economic sabotage, or should capitalists instigate lockouts and in a possible ensuing melee charge unionists with instigating against bystanders, the proposed measure can be used as a refuge for capitalists for union-busting and harassing union leaders," the statement said.

The group also pointed out that labor leaders who joined earlier mass actions against Ms Arroyo's policies were hurt or arrested. If the antiterror bill became law, they claimed it could pave the way for more violence against the leaders.

Brute force

"With the calibrated preemptive response policy firmly in place, we have already seen the brute force of the state being employed against peaceful demonstrations and mobilizations in an attempt to stifle legitimate political dissent. With the antiterror bill, the possibility of police brutality reaching new heights becomes inevitable," the APL said.

The calibrated preemptive response policy or CPR was used by the police to arrest or disperse groups calling on the President to step down because of allegations that she cheated in the last election.

Travelers left behind over ₱6M at airport

By Nikko Dizon

SOME P6.2 MILLION—IN VARIOUS denominations—was recovered by the Philippine National Police-Aviation Security Group (PNP-ASG) and returned to passengers who had inadvertently left the money at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) between January and March 2006.

The denominations included Philippine peso, Japanese yen, US dollar and Korean won, among others. Nearly half-a-million pesos was recovered and returned to passengers, according to Naia's first quarter report.

In a hurry

"Departing passengers leave their money behind because they are in a hurry to catch their flights," Supt. Pablo Francisco Balagtas, chief of the 1st Police Center for Aviation Security (PCAS), said in a phone interview.

The 1st PCAS has jurisdiction over Naia Terminal 1 and the international passenger terminal at Naia Centennial Terminal 2.

Top of the list

According to the same report, cell phones topped the list of lost and found items at the Naia.

A total of 553 cell phones were recovered. Wristwatches came next with a total of 137 pieces.

"Passengers often forget their wristwatches and cell phones on the tray that goes through the X-ray machines," Balagtas said.

Four Magic Sing microphones were also recovered by the police.

Videoke-loving

"The Magic Sing were owned by *balikbayans* and OFWs," said Balagtas referring to the popular *pasalubong* (present) among the videoke-loving Pinoys.

Utility knives topped the list of confiscated items among passengers. A total of 826 were confiscated from January to March.

"These are just small knives. Still, under the law, it is prohibited to carry the item in your bag," Balagtas said.

Bullets as amulets

A total of 107 "key chain bullets," mostly used as amulets to ward off evil spirits, were confiscated, the report said.

The PNP-ASG has repeatedly warned passengers that bullets are prohibited inside the airport and on aircraft even if they are used as amulets.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, April 10, 2006
Monday of Holy Week

1st Reading: Is 42;1-7
Gospel: John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where he had raised Lazarus, the dead man, to life. Now they gave a dinner for him, and while Martha waited on them, Lazarus sat at the table with Jesus.

Then Mary took a pound of costly perfume made from genuine nard and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair. And the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Judas, son of Simon Iscariot—the disciple who was to betray Jesus—remarked, "This perfume could have been sold for three hundred dinarii and turned over to the poor." Judas, indeed, had no concern for the poor; he was a thief and as he held the common purse, he used to help himself to the funds.

But Jesus spoke up, "Leave her alone. Was she not keeping it for the day of my burial? (The poor you always have with you, but you will not always have me.)"

Many Jews heard that Jesus was there and they came, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests thought about killing Lazarus as well, for many of the Jews were drifting away because of him and believing in Jesus.

Commentary

This is Jesus the servant who brings justice but his ways are different from the prophets of old. He speaks softly to the poor. He will not lean on what is already trembling, nor let what is near breaking point shatter. He will not let what is flickering go out. He comes with no violence, no harm, no power that destroys. He comes with the Spirit of God, the breath of his mouth, his Word, calling us for victory and grasping us by hand for justice, for light and hope. Martha serves this prophet of life in gratitude as a servant and Mary anoints this prophet who will die violently with ointment worth a year's wages. Who do we serve and who do we generously do the works of mercy for, knowing this is the only Body of Christ we will ever have the privilege to touch and honor as we would Jesus?

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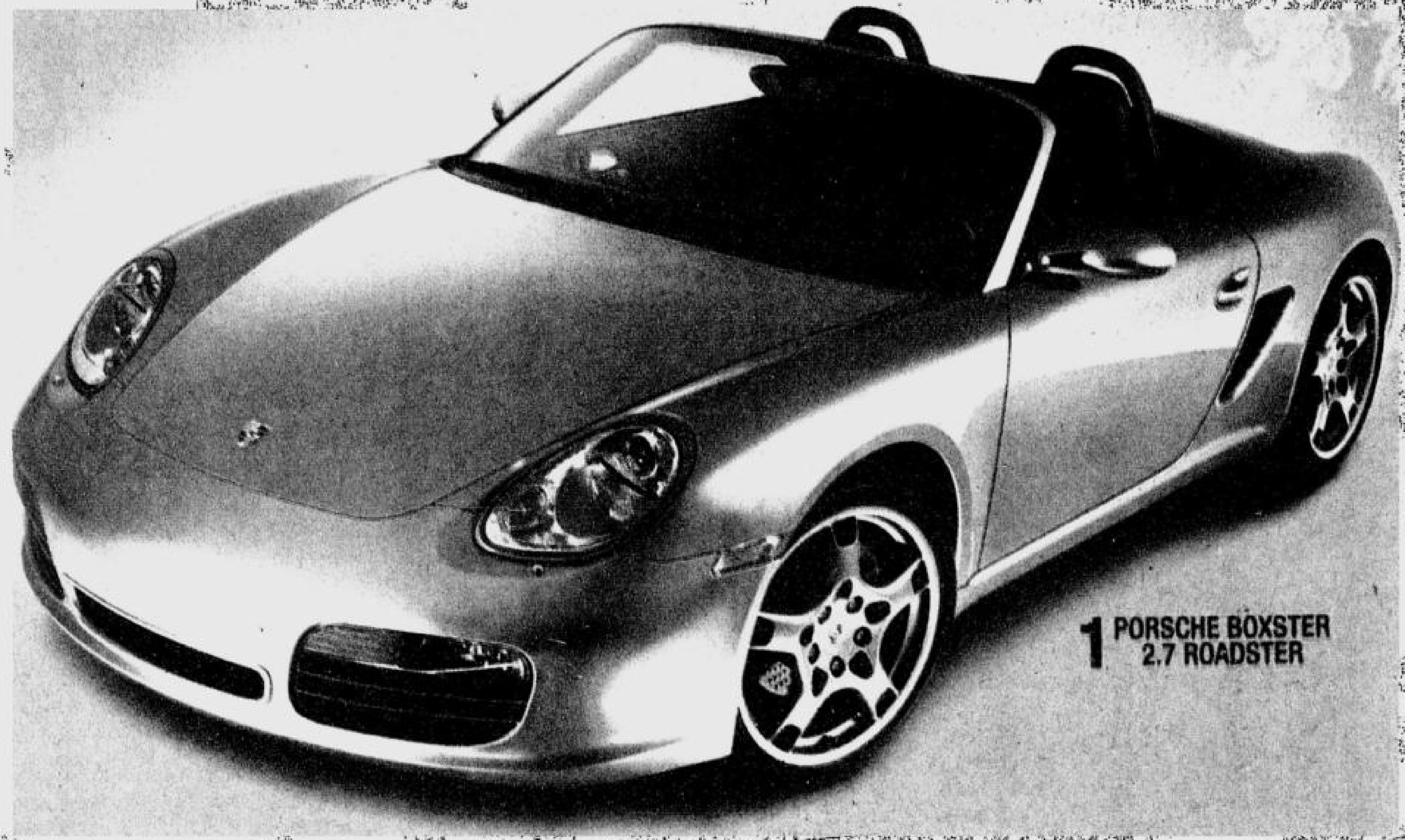
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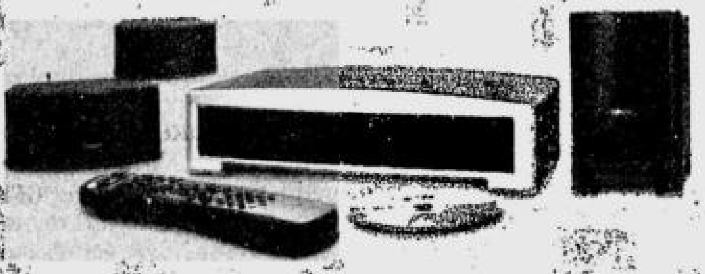

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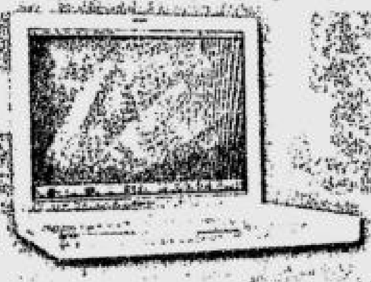

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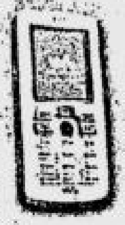

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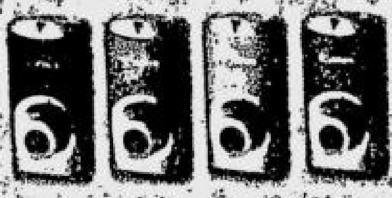

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7. All entries must be received by Philip Morris not later than June 4, 2006. Philip Morris and its agents will have no responsibility for lost, illegible, incomplete, misdirected, mutilated, postage due, or late entries.

8. The draw will be held on June 23, 2006 in the presence of a DOH-BFAD representative. The following prizes will be drawn:

Quantity	Description of Prize
1	Porsche Boxster 2.7 Roadster
15	Bose 3-2-1 GS-II Home Entertainment System
20	Apple iBook 40GB
45	Sony Ericsson W800i mobile phones
65	Canon IXUS iZOOM digital cameras
100	Apple iPod Nano 2GB

9. The names of the winners will be published in one of the leading newspapers not later than July 18, 2006. Winners will be notified via telegram as to when and where they can claim their prizes. By participating, the winners agree to the inclusion of their names and/or pictures in the Winners Advertisement.

10. Prizes will only be awarded to the person whose name appears on the winning entry. Prizes not claimed within 60 days from publication of the winners, or notification of winners, whichever comes later, will be forfeited with the written approval of the DOH-BFAD.

11. In claiming a prize, the winner must present the original notification telegram from Philip Morris and two (2) original and valid identification documents [Driver's license, Passport, Birth Certificate] and Tax Identification Number (TIN). The IDs presented (singly or collectively) should show the following information below. If the IDs submitted do not contain the following three (3) pieces of information, it will not be accepted as valid proof of identification:

- Full Name
- Date of Birth or Age
- Signature

12. In case the winner is unable to present two (2) original and valid ID's acceptable to Philip Morris, he/she must submit sworn affidavits, executed by two (2) disinterested persons attesting to his/her identity; and a certification from the responsible municipality/city official certifying that he/she is a resident of the said municipality/city.

13. In cases wherein the winner cannot personally claim the prize for any reason, he/she can send a proxy. The proxy should be able to present the following:
- A letter of authorization duly signed by the winner, nominating the proxy as the acknowledged recipient of the prize on the winner's behalf.
- Two (2) original and valid ID's of the winner (singly or collectively showing the required information as mentioned in item 11).
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- Original copy of the notification telegram from Philip Morris.

14. An entrant can only win once. If a person is drawn more than once, the winner will receive the prize of the higher value and a winner for the other prize will be re-drawn.

15. Prizes are not transferable or convertible to cash.

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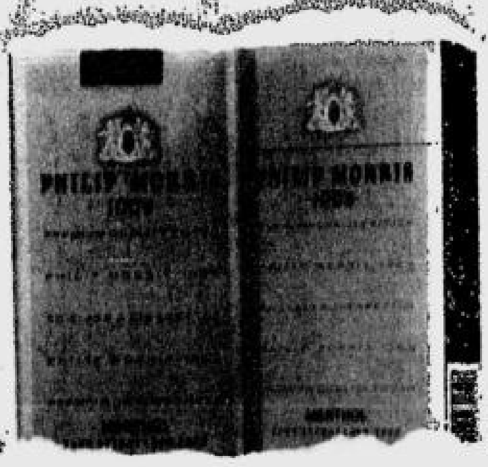

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Pope calls for 'purification of hearts'

VATICAN CITY—SURROUNDED by palm and olive branches, Pope Benedict XVI led the Roman Catholic Church toward the first Easter season of his pontificate on Sunday and said selfishness and corruption were devastating today's world.

Benedict presided at a Palm Sunday service in St. Peter's Square to commemorate Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem where he was welcomed by adoring crowds a week before people turned against him and he was arrested and crucified.

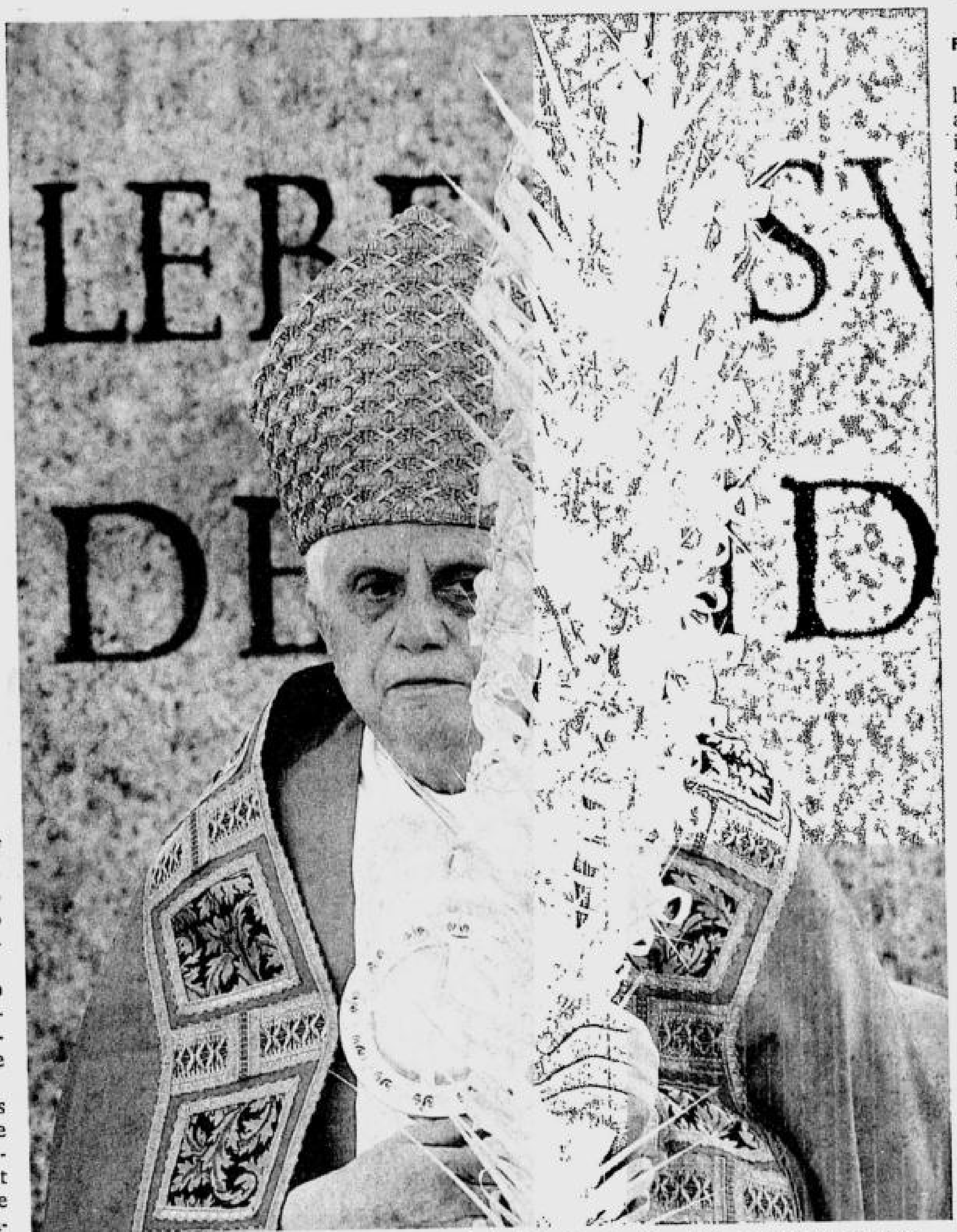
This year marks the first Easter season for Benedict. His predecessor, John Paul II, was in his dying days for all of last year's Easter season and was only able to make brief appearances in the week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. John Paul died on April 2, a week after Easter.

Speaking on a brilliantly sunny day to tens of thousands of people, Benedict wove his sermon around the contrast between material and spiritual riches and the relationship between personal freedom and responsibility.

After blessing palm and olive branches—symbols of peace—the Pope called for people around the world to undergo "a purification of hearts" to help heal what he said was a "lacerated world."

Benedict urged the people to look to Christ for help to "overcome the corruption and selfishness which is devastating the world today."

Christ's message, he said, was "not to respond to an injustice with another injustice, to violence with another violence, but to remind us that evil can only be overcome with good, not with another evil."



POPE Benedict XVI holds a palm branch as he leads the Palm Sunday Mass at St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. REUTERS

World Day of Youth

Palm Sunday also marked this year's World Day of Youth, which is held in local dioceses each year and at an international venue about every three years in the presence of the Pope.

The last international day was in August last year in the Pope's native Germany; the next will be in 2008 in Sydney, Australia.

The Pope, wearing red and white vestments, urged young people not to give in to the temptations of worldly riches and moral irresponsibility.

"All this sounds convincing and seductive but it is the language of the serpent," he said, referring to the Biblical story where Eve was convinced by the devil in the form of a snake to disobey God.

At the service, young people from Germany handed over to those from Australia a large wooden cross to take to Sydney.

The Pope said the journey to Sydney would symbolize the young Australians' attempt to spread peace "across continents and cultures, across a world lacerated and tormented by violence."

Hectic week

The 78-year-old Pope will have a hectic week ahead of him as he leads Roman Catholics to Easter. He is scheduled to hold his general audience on Wednesday.

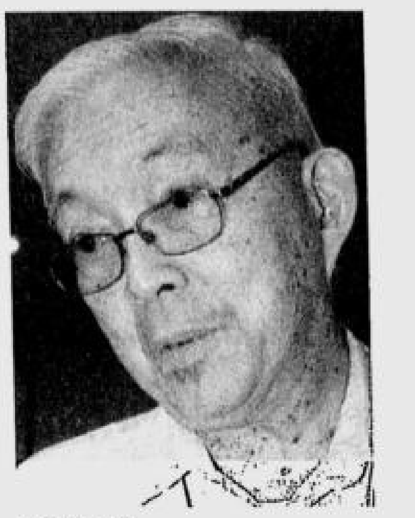
On Holy Thursday, he is expected to preside at two services, including one in which he will wash and kiss the feet of 12 priests in a gesture commemorating Christ's gesture of humility to his apostles on the night before he died.

On Good Friday, Benedict will hold two services commemorating Christ's death, including a Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) procession around the ancient ruins of Rome's Colosseum.

The Pope is scheduled to say an Easter Eve Mass on Saturday night. On Sunday, he will deliver an "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) blessing and message. *Reuters*

Like Pope, Rosales under shadow of predecessor

From page A1



ROSALES

hierarchy, dominated by Sin for almost 21 years, is divided on the issue of what position the Church should take in the public demand for the resignation of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Second, how the hierarchy would implement Pope Benedict's first encyclical of Dec. 25, 2005, admonishing the bishops to tone down excessive political interventions in secular politics.

Church activism

Sin led the Philippine Church in a period of high politicization in the Philippines and in the Vatican. Pope John Paul engaged the papacy in the battle against communism and Sin engaged the Philippine Church in the battles against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.

Having been installed as archbishop of Manila in just two years, Rosales has not made even a dent to dismantle the legacy of political activism of Sin, acknowledged as the prime mover of the "people power" movements in the Philippines that toppled Marcos in 1986 and President Joseph Estrada in 2001.

Rosales is struggling not only to scale down the Church's political interventionism but steer it into the middle ground of political moderation amid the political crisis of President Arroyo.

These two poles of political action that are pulling the bishops in two opposite directions—the faction favoring moderation and the faction seeking to align the Church behind the campaign to oust President Arroyo—sharpen the political division of Filipinos who are polarized by the issue over the demand for her exit.

In this respect, the Church faces also the problem of a strong and inspired leadership. On the other hand, the Filipino people are similarly desperate for a strong and inspired leadership.

The people are seeking from their religious leaders in the Catholic Church direction and inspiration that they are not getting from their divided bishops and their fractured political leadership.

They are expecting from their Church the clarity of vision and the decisiveness and moral authority they had received from Sin—although Sin had not been always right.

In recent years before his death, Pope John Paul had anxieties over the high-profile politicization of Sin and had tried to restrain him. Filipinos expect Sin's firm direction and clarity of vision from Cardinal Rosales.

The dilemma

The dilemma of Rosales lies in the doctrinal position of the Church as laid out in Pope Benedict's first encyclical on relations between Church and State.

In the second half of the encyclical, the Pope wrote that the Church has a vital political role—not to replace governments but to press for higher issues of social conscience.

The Pope wrote: The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She must not, cannot, replace the state. Yet at the same time, she cannot, and must not, remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.

Upon his return to Manila from the Vatican, Rosales offered few clues on how he would implement this policy.

He merely said that the "the Philippines has a special role in the evangelization of the Orient," and there was a "call to unity ... in eliminating injustice and inequalities that deny anyone a dignified life."

But prior to his departure for Rome, Rosales had revealed he had given a high priority to environmental issues and poverty alleviation which were his main mission when he was bishop of Bukidnon.

Balancing policy

In a pastoral letter on July 23, 2005, Rosales outlined a political balancing policy in regard to the crisis of the Macapagal administration.

The letter defined the "fundamental principles that should govern our search for solutions to our present crisis."

The first theme is that he did not find sufficient Ms Arroyo's apology that she made a "lapse in judgement" in the "Hello Garci" tapes and that the President should be made accountable for that intervention in the electoral process.

The second point is that the Church abhors "extraconstitutional" means to resolve the crisis and that the "pursuit of truth regarding the grave charges against leaders and officials should be conducted within the provisions of our Constitution and should respect the laws of the land."

The third theme emphatically rejected violence as a mode for resolving the crisis. "Any proposed solution ... that relies on, or leads to, violence is unacceptable," the pastoral letter says.

Limitations

What's clear is that Rosales knows his limitations in different times and circumstances of crisis. Apparently, he is not trying to be another Cardinal Sin and is not following in Sin's footsteps. Apparently, Rosales is getting out of the mold of "people power" politics.

In this respect, Rosales, like Pope Benedict, is acting as a transitional leader of the Philippine Church now undergoing a fundamental policy change on matters of Church relations with the State.

The Church's direction in this qualitative policy reorientation will be unveiled in Rosales' pastoral letters and decisions of the bishops' conferences.

These will tell us how much influence Rosales can exert in bringing the bishops in line with his middle-of-the-road position.

Age of 'Judas' Gospel' text crucial point

From page A1

But should modern-day Christians take anything in "Judas" to be historically true?

Scholars will debate that for years to come, and the age of the text will be a crucial point in their arguments.

There seems little doubt that the document published by National Geographic is, indeed, ancient—despite a murky recent history.

Found by a farmer in a remote Egyptian burial cave in the 1970s, the text was sold to an antiques dealer who at one point left it disintegrating for 16 years in a safe-deposit box in Long Island, New York. After changing hands a couple of times, it finally ended up with a Swiss foundation, according to "The Lost Gospel" by journalist Herbet Krosney, which was released with the document.

Judging from radiocarbon testing, the papyrus text appears to date from about 300 AD, or perhaps a bit later based on analysis of the handwriting style.

Copy of a text

The scholarly team that studied "Judas" for National Geographic—including Rodolphe Kasser of Switzerland's University of Geneva, Marvin Meyer of America's Chapman University and Gregor Wurst of Germany's University of Augsburg—believe the document is a copy of a text first mentioned as heretical by Bishop Irenaeus in 180 AD.

But even if this is actually Irenaeus' "Judas," a point that will spark further debate, the material would still have been written many decades after the composition of the four New Testament Gospels that the early church accepted as authentic. Scholars' consensus dates: Around 70 AD for Mark, 90-100 AD for John, Matthew and Luke in between.

The way these debates typically develop, the later the document was written, the less likely it has any reliable connection to the people who knew Jesus or were among his early followers. Without that, the document is not important for learning about Jesus' actual history but only for documenting a particular sect's beliefs in the second century and beyond.

Nagging question

Another nagging question about the "Judas" scenario: Since the New Testament says Judas killed himself shortly after betraying Jesus, how would anyone have known about the secret revelations this manuscript claims Jesus gave Judas only days before Good Friday.

On that point, New Testament scholar Bruce Chilton of Bard College thinks "Judas" was not meant as biography in the first place. The heavily mystical content shows the text "never set out to provide historical information and to pretend it does is a distortion," Chilton says.

One consultant on the "Judas" project, Elaine Pagels of Princeton University, popularized such Egyptian texts from outside the New Testament in "The Gnostic Gospels" (Gnostic refers to groups that generally shunned the material world and taught salvation through supposed secret knowledge from Jesus).

To Pagels, the importance of texts like "Judas" is that they are "exploding the myth of a monolithic religion" and showing how diverse early Christianity was. Conservative scholars say we have always known about the diversity but the Christian consensus on the Jesus portrayed in the New Testament Gospels was early, strong and widespread. *AP*

Rolling Stones rocks to China's satisfaction

From page A1

The concert on Saturday, a late addition to the band's Biggest Bang world tour, was the product of lengthy negotiations and numerous compromises—from the venue, a diminutive 8,000-seat indoor arena, to the songs allowed by Chinese censors.

The five songs that were reportedly banned were "Brown Sugar," "Beast of Burden," "Let's Spend the Night Together," "Honky Tonk Women" and "Rough Justice," a song from the Stones' new album. The first four were also left off the Chinese version of the band's greatest hits album when it was released here in 2003.

The sold-out performance brought together cosmopolitan Shanghai at its richest, in more senses than one. With the cheapest seats costing about $40—and most priced at five to 10 times more, well above monthly salaries for most people here—the cost ensured that well-heeled foreigners dominated the crowd.

Mick Jagger, the group's lead singer, acknowledged as much himself in a news conference the day before with a comment meant to address two of the most delicate issues surrounding the event—the heavily foreign audience and the restricted song list.

"I am pleased the Ministry of Culture is protecting the morals of expatriate bankers and their girlfriends," Jagger said.

Many people said they were displeased with the ticket prices, and the effect on the audience mix, nonetheless.

"It's actually tragic if you think about it: A foreign performance borrowing Chinese land, but Chinese people cannot come because of price or other issues," said Chu Meng, 23, who attended the concert.

"It is ironic, I should say. I saw some foreigners cover themselves with the Chinese flag, and I don't feel comfortable about it," Chu added.

The Stones tried to ease their introduction to an unfamiliar crowd by sharing the stage for one of their signature hits, "Wild Horses," with Cui Jian, 45, a pioneer of Chinese rock who, unlike most of the fans, both knew the lyrics and did not miss a beat in his rhythm guitar accompaniment.

The rock 'n' roll era all but bypassed China, which was in the throes of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution during the music's heyday.

The Stones are by far the biggest rock act to appear in China, and their concert will be the first to be broadcast in the country after censors screen it.

Truth be told, the group may have arrived here both far too soon and far too late. The Chinese government protects few things so zealously as culture, with the result that few here knew anything about the group.

"I've never listened to their songs," said Shen Yichen, a 16-year-old girl who was accompanied by her parents. "Maybe listening like this for the first time is more authentic." *New York Times News Service*

Travelers advised: Be at airport 3 hours early

From page A1

"We encourage our passengers to check in at least three hours before their scheduled flights. We don't want to cause them any inconvenience or delay brought about by the implementation of airport safety and security inspections and procedures," general manager Alfonso Cusi of the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) said in a statement.

"Anticipating intrusion of unscrupulous elements in the airport vicinities, regular patrol of (public) areas has been ordered," the statement said.

The Miaa is carrying out rigid screening of passengers and their luggage at both the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) and the old domestic airport to deter any terrorists who might take advantage of the Holy Week crush at airport terminals.

The Miaa said it would ensure police visibility at international and domestic airport terminals to facilitate the smooth flow of passengers, manage the movements of well-wishers, and supervise the flow of vehicular traffic at disembarkation and embarkation areas.

The Miaa has also set up 24-hour "Oplan Mahal na Araw" curbside departure counters at both the Manila domestic airport and Naia Terminal 2 south wing to assist passengers. The counters will be operational up to April 14, Good Friday.

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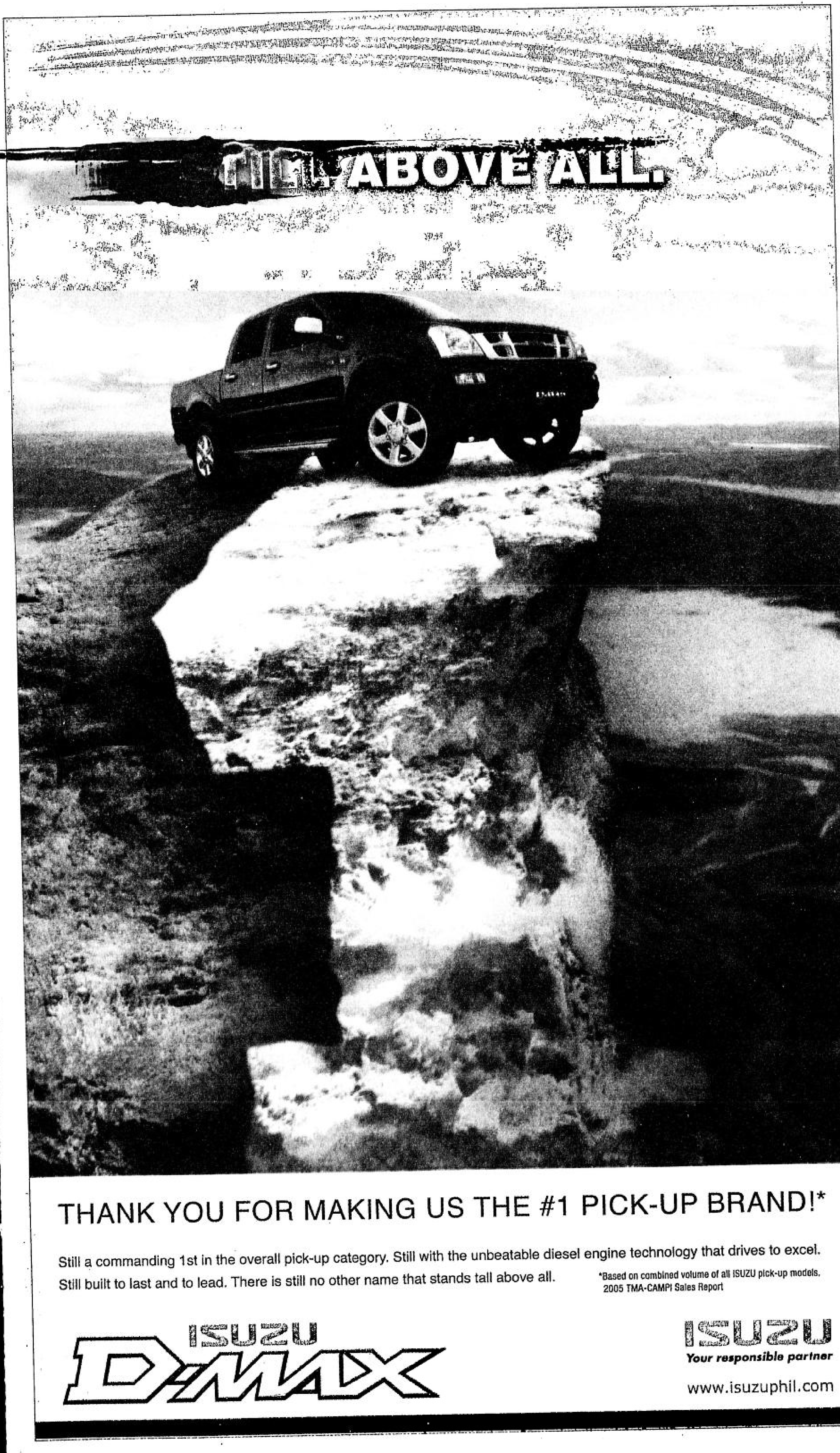

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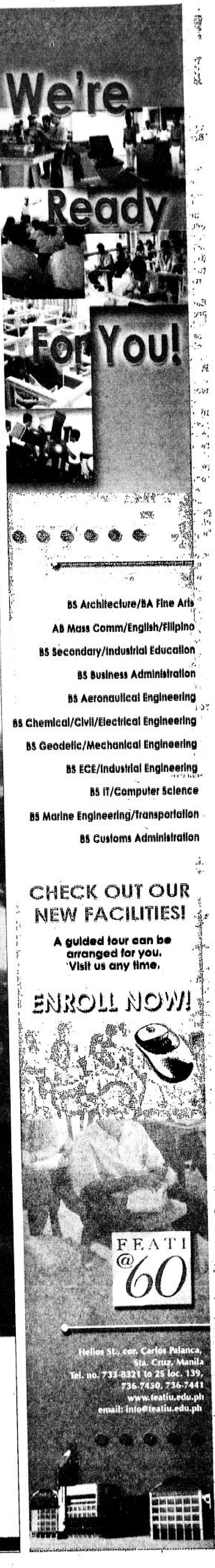

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Moriones Festival still a top tourist draw for RP

BOAC, MARINDUQUE—MARINDUQUE is sparing no effort to strengthen its hold on the title of "Lenten Capital of the Philippines" by rolling out the red carpet for visitors wanting to take part in its world-renowned Moriones Festival.

The Moriones Festival is the highlight of Holy Week rites, but the island province has also made elaborate preparations to make traditional Lenten activities as the "Pasyon," "cenaculo," "estacion heneral" and the "visita iglesia" powerful crowd-drawers.

Each of the province's six municipalities will stage one or the other of such activities, with every part of the island pulsing with religious fervor during the season.

Bonus attraction

An added attraction will be the Marinduque Expo 2006 to be held at the Marinduque Morion Park and Arena in Boac, set to be opened during the week by Gov. Carmencita O. Reyes.

Yesterday's Palm Sunday Masses and processions, known locally as the "hosanahan," kicked off with a flourish the weeklong Lenten celebration.

Holy Monday will feature the traditional parade of the Morions and Samaritanas in all the towns of the province.

Masked centurions

Thereafter, as a daily showcase for the Holy Week, the Morions or the masked centurions will roam around the towns to fulfill their vows.

It is believed that becoming a Morion ensures good health, or helps the devotee recover from illness and keeps him out of danger and guarantees a good harvest.

Songs and rituals

There will also be presentations of songs and praise, the "bulating"—a Lenten ritual from Barangay Malbog of Boac, the Kalbaryuhan—a Lenten ritual from Barangay De Villa of Santa Cruz—and the traditional "cenaculos," which will be held in all municipalities.

Flagellants doing their penance at the Gasan Old Cemetery are also expected to draw attention.

Beheaded

The climax of the Lenten celebration will be the "Pugutan," a Filipino version of the Passion of Christ. The "Pugutan" depicts the life of Longinus, the Roman soldier who pierced Christ's side with a spear as He was nailed to the cross and was a witness to Jesus's resurrection.

Longinus was arrested for spreading the news of Christ's resurrection and was beheaded.

The traditional Salubong at Bati and the Easter Masses will cap the Lenten activities.

Government officials and employees will be reporting for work the whole week, wearing "Morion" and "Samaritana" costumes.

The provincial government has coordinated with transportation and hotel operators to ensure a pleasurable and safe stay for tourists. *Gerald Gene R. Querubin, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

.5-M foreign visitors set new RP tourism record

By Jerome Aning

A RECORD HALF-MILLION FOREIGN visitors arrived in the Philippines during the first quarter of the year, according to the Department of Tourism.

Visitors in January and February, traditionally considered lean months following the Christmas holiday season, rose by 17 percent with 420,375 inbound tourists coming to the country, the DOT said.

Preliminary figures for March indicated that arrivals would surpass 80,000, setting a new first quarter arrival record, DOT assistant secretary for tourism planning and promotions Eduardo Jarque Jr. said in a phone interview.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano first announced the 17-percent increase last Thursday during the opening of the 1st Tourism Job Fair in Manila.

"We are confident that we will reach, if not surpass, our 3 million foreign tourist arrivals for this year," Durano said.

South Koreans were the largest group, making up 21.6 percent of total arrivals or 106,261 visitors. Americans followed with 19.9 percent or 97,714 tourists. Next came the Japanese with 15.5 percent or 76,402 arrivals.

Tourist destinations around the world benefited from Korean tourists, whose numbers passed the 10 million-mark for the first time last year. About three-fourths of Korean travelers visited Asian countries mostly during the months of July and August.

This led the Bangkok-based Pacific Asia Travel Association to label South Korea as the world's latest "tourism superpower."

Meanwhile, DOT's main market, mainland China, ranked fifth in terms of volume, accounting for 23,227 arrivals in the first two months. However, China topped all markets in terms of growth rate, posting a 162.9 percent over the same period last year.

Durano stressed the need to expand the country's tourism infrastructure, particularly room accommodations, for the expected influx of foreign visitors.

He said the country was beginning to reap the fruits of its specific-market approach in promoting Philippine tourism overseas.

'Arrogant,' group describes GMA statement

By Jerome Aning

THE MILITANT ALLIANCE OF PROgressive labor (APL) said Friday it took "exceptional offense" to President Macapagal-Arroyo's recent statement that there would be fewer jobless Filipinos if more of them were willing to start at the bottom.

APL secretary general Joshua Mata described as "arrogant and hypocritical" the President's advice to job seekers at the 1st Tourism Job Fair in Manila last week that "there are many jobs available and it is important for you to be willing to accept these jobs that are available."

The President urged job applicants to be willing to start at the bottom and then show how good they are once they get hired.

She appeared to be echoing Trade Secretary Peter Favila's claim that there was no lack of job opportunities in the country; it was just that unemployed Filipinos were picky about what jobs to take.

"It seems Favila did not commit a blunder in his statement about Filipinos being picky with jobs. This seems to be the government view and we [feel] hopeless we will be able to solve the unemployment problem as long as we have leaders like them in the government," Mata said.

He said the President remained "in denial of the crisis-in-jobs situation," when figures from the National Statistics Office revealed that jobs were being lost in sectors regarded as integral to genuine development and growth.

NSO data as of January 2006, he pointed out, showed that the fishing sector had lost 5,000 jobs, manufacturing 18,000, health and social work 32,000, and construction also 32,000.

"The jobs available do not give security of tenure," Mata said. "Six or even just four months down the road, contractual workers are back on the streets looking for work. The jobs supposedly created are mere replacement jobs, and not really new ones."

300 nursing studes won't graduate

MORE THAN 300 NURSING STUDENTS AT World Citi Colleges (WCC) in Quezon City will not be able to graduate today after the school administration excluded their names from the list of graduating students on April 3.

In a statement, the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) said officials of WCC did not include the names of the students because they failed to pass a pre-board exam given by the school's in-house review center Smart Link.

NUSP president Marco de los Reyes said only 157 out of the 500 graduating nursing students would be allowed to march in their commencement exercise scheduled today despite having paid their graduation fees amounting to P11,800.

"The WCC's decision was not only arbitrary but it also violates the Commission on Higher Education's (CHEd) policies," De los Reyes said.

CHEd's memorandum No. 13 provides that higher education institutions are prohibited from forcing their graduates and graduating students to enroll in review centers run by the school or a center of the school's preference.

"WCC clearly violated CMO 13 when it disqualified students from graduating based on the results of a private review center. Besides, the decision was made only a week before the school's graduation and after the students had already paid their graduation fees," De los Reyes pointed out.

However, the students told the NUSP that they already passed their pre-board exams conducted by the school as part of one of their subjects. They argued that the exam at the review center was not even in their syllabus.

"The school cannot force its students to enroll and take exams in a review center of its preference. Moreover, how can the school claim that these students failed the exams when they are concealing its actual results? There must be transparency," De los Reyes said.

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Customs exec fails lifestyle check, is suspended

By Nelson F. Flores

OMBUDSMAN MERCEDITAS GUTIERREZ HAS suspended for six months without pay a Bureau of Customs official who flunked a lifestyle check after he was found to have bought several properties beyond his income capacity.

In a 16-page directive issued last Wednesday, Gutierrez suspended BOC chief operations officer Leovigildo de Castro who had allegedly accumulated P27.4 million in unexplained wealth, making him administratively liable for "dishonesty, grave misconduct and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service."

Ombudsman investigators also found that De Castro and his family took "more or less 70 trips abroad" from 1993 to 2004 and had a fleet of expensive cars, most of which were registered under the name of his children who had no financial capacity to buy them.

Investigators estimated that De Castro's family spent at least P2.1 million for travel expenses in all of their 70 foreign trips.

They noted that De Castro only had a monthly salary of P25,254 or an annual income of P303,052, based on his declared income in 2004.

Gutierrez said De Castro's P27.4 million in assets were "grossly disproportionate to his legitimate income." Except for his government salary, De Castro and his wife had no other sources of income, she said.

Gutierrez directed Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales to immediately implement the suspension order noting there was "strong evidence of guilt" against De Castro.

De Castro started his BOC career in 1973 as a warehouse storekeeper. He became inspector in 1979, then supervisor in 1980 and was promoted to supervising customs operation officer in 1989. From 1996 up to the present, he has been chief of the BOC operations office.

Among the assets De Castro declared in his statement of assets and liabilities (SAL) between 1994 and 2003 were a house and lot in Parañaque City, a house and lot in Taal, Batangas, agricultural land in Laguna and a car worth P620,000 which he purchased in 2002.

However, De Castro failed to declare his P416,669 investment in Lemar Export and Import Corp. formed in May 1994 and other assets registered under the name of his children, Gutierrez said.

De Castro's eldest son, dentist Leo Gerald, owns a P3.9-million condominium on the 18th floor of the Medical Plaza Building in Legaspi Village, Makati City, and a 450-square-meter lot in Alabang Hills, Muntinlupa City, worth P1.8 million.

Leo Gerald also bought a Toyota Land Cruiser worth P2.8 million in June 2000, which he sold in April 2003.

Gutierrez said Leo Gerald and his wife only had P71,000 in income for 2000 and P67,000 in 2001.

De Castro's youngest son, Leovigildo Jr., owns another condominium worth P5.6 million at Richville Corporate Tower.

De Castro's daughter, Marina Rose, is the registered owner of a 2004 Honda CRV Wagon worth P701,832 while a Toyota worth P500,000 was registered under the name of another daughter, Ma. Antoinette.

2 Samar prov'l officials charged with withholding GSIS payments

GOVERNMENT PROSECUTORS HAVE FILED criminal charges before the Sandiganbayan against two Samar provincial officials on allegations that they illegally withheld Government Service Insurance System payments to employees.

The Ombudsman's charged Samar provincial treasurer Beinvenido Z. Sabenecio and provincial accountant Francasio M. Detosil with violating Section 52 (f) of Republic Act No. 8291 on the GSIS Act of 1997.

The two allegedly failed to remit three months' worth of contributions to the state pension fund within the required 30 days from due date.

"[T]here is sufficient evidence to show that respondents Sabenecio and Detosil failed to remit to the GSIS the monthly contributions of the employees of the provincial government of Samar. Respondent Governor [Milagros] Tan's participation, which is the act of signing and approving the subject Disbursement vouchers, appears to be ministerial only," the Ombudsman said in its 10-page resolution.

The case stemmed from a complaint filed by Rev. Fr. Pedrito L. Lucero, a priest in Catbalogan, Samar.

Lucero accused Tan and the defendants of confederating with each other in withholding payment of the employees' GSIS contributions from December 2003 to February 2004.

The respondents said they had no criminal liability since the remittances were paid as shown in three checks for one for each month for they submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman.

The respondents added that the New Local Government Code gave local government units greater financial autonomy so they could re-channel funds from one budgetary item to another based on perceived urgency.

The Ombudsman, however, thought otherwise, noting that the GSIS Act was very clear in setting a deadline for the remittance of employee contributions and that the Samar provincial government submitted the checks beyond the reglementary period prescribed by the same law.

"Respondents cannot exempt themselves from liability by mere claim of good faith and absence of criminal intent considering that the crime of which they are charged emanates from a special law. Wherefore, finding sufficient evidence for the indictment of respondents [Sabenecio and Detosil], let the corresponding information be filed with the proper court," the Ombudsman said.

Nelson F. Flores

Coast Guard offers to train sniffer dogs

THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD WANTS TO help strengthen the capability of private shipping companies to secure their offices and facilities to lessen the chances of terror or criminal attacks taking place on ships or in port areas.

To do this, it has offered to take in the companies' dogs and their handlers into the PCG's K9 Handler's Course.

PCG operations chief Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo said the course, while not free, may be availed of for a minimal amount that is generally less than what most K9 training schools are asking.

"We were not into profit when we started the course. We're offering it to the private sector for a minimal amount," said Tamayo in a recent interview.

According to him, the PCG is doing its best to secure ships and ports, but it would not hurt to have more security on the private sector's part.

"If we train their dogs, they could serve as force multipliers. While the PCG has its own security force with K9 units, it would not hurt to have more K9s around ships whether the dogs belong to the shipping companies or to government," Tamayo said.

Leila B. Salaverria

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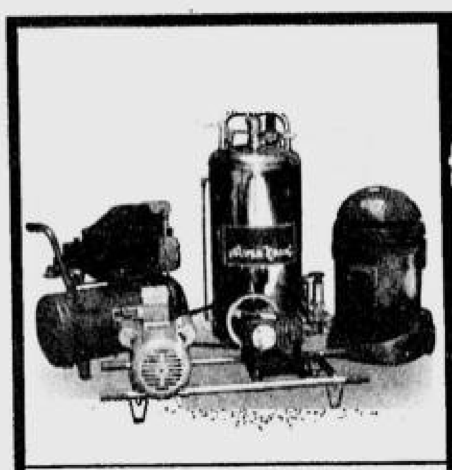

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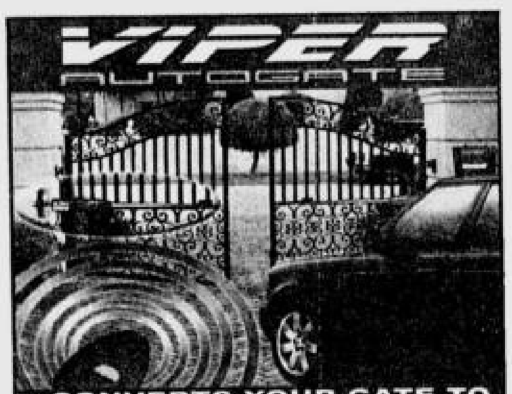

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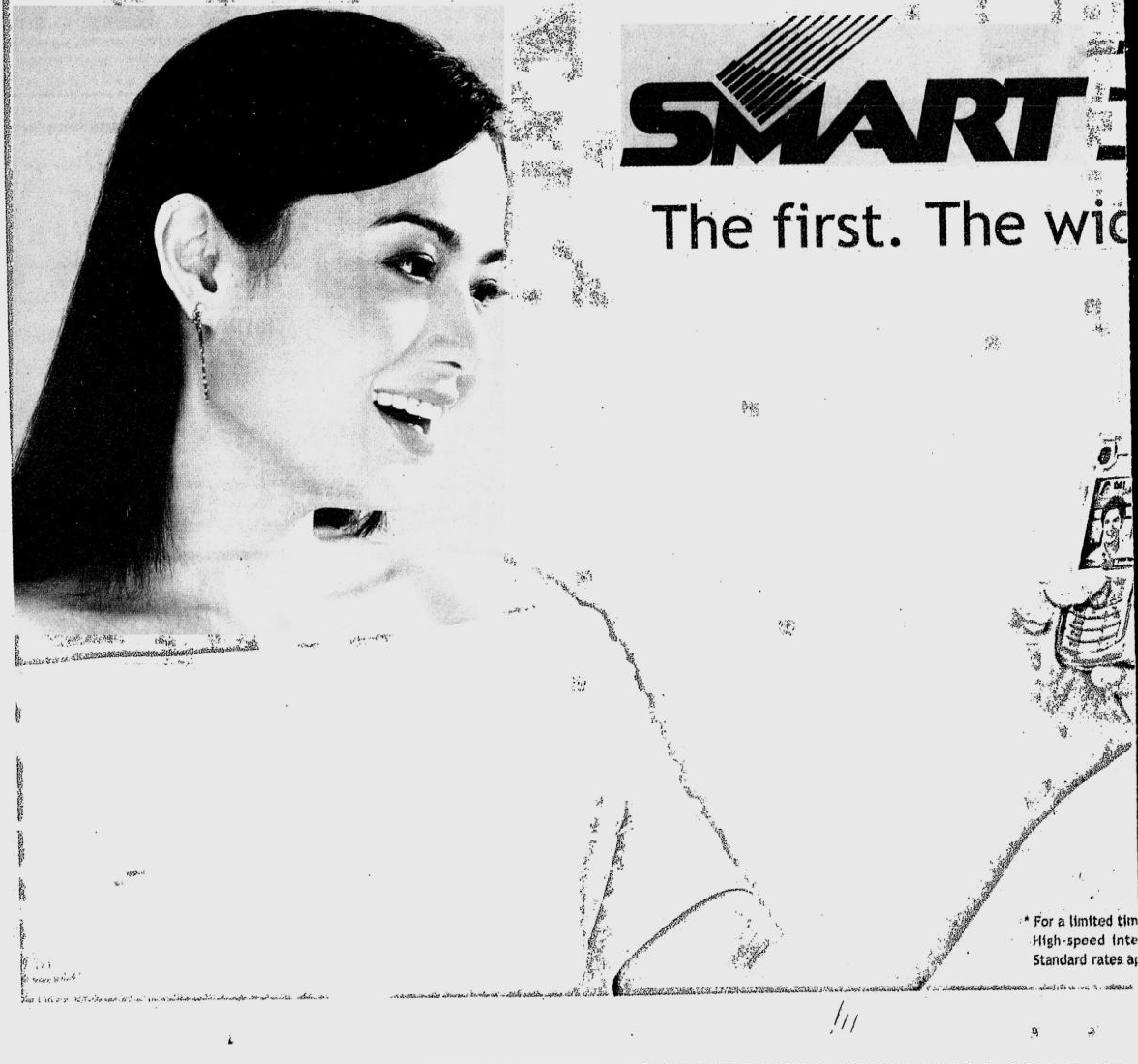

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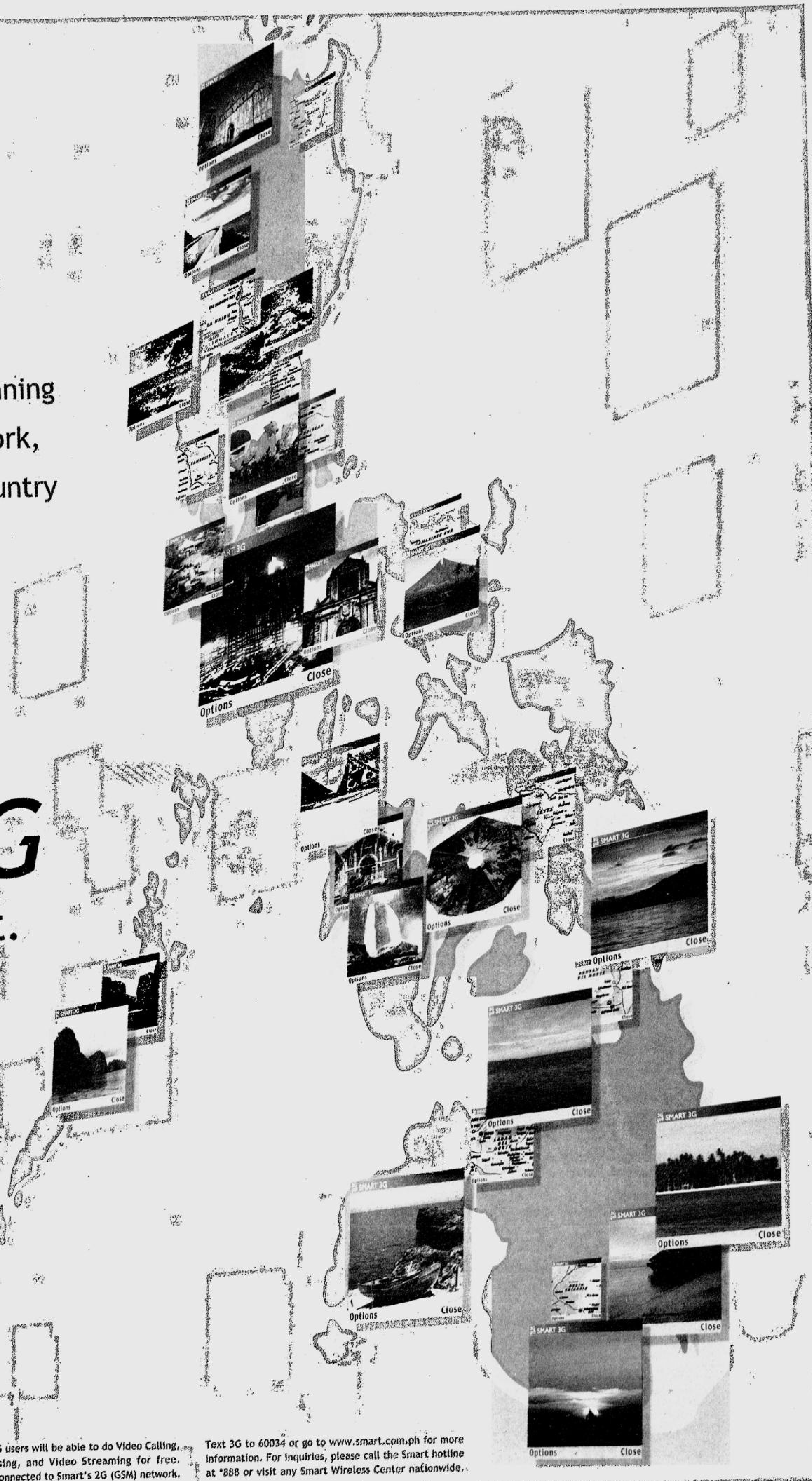

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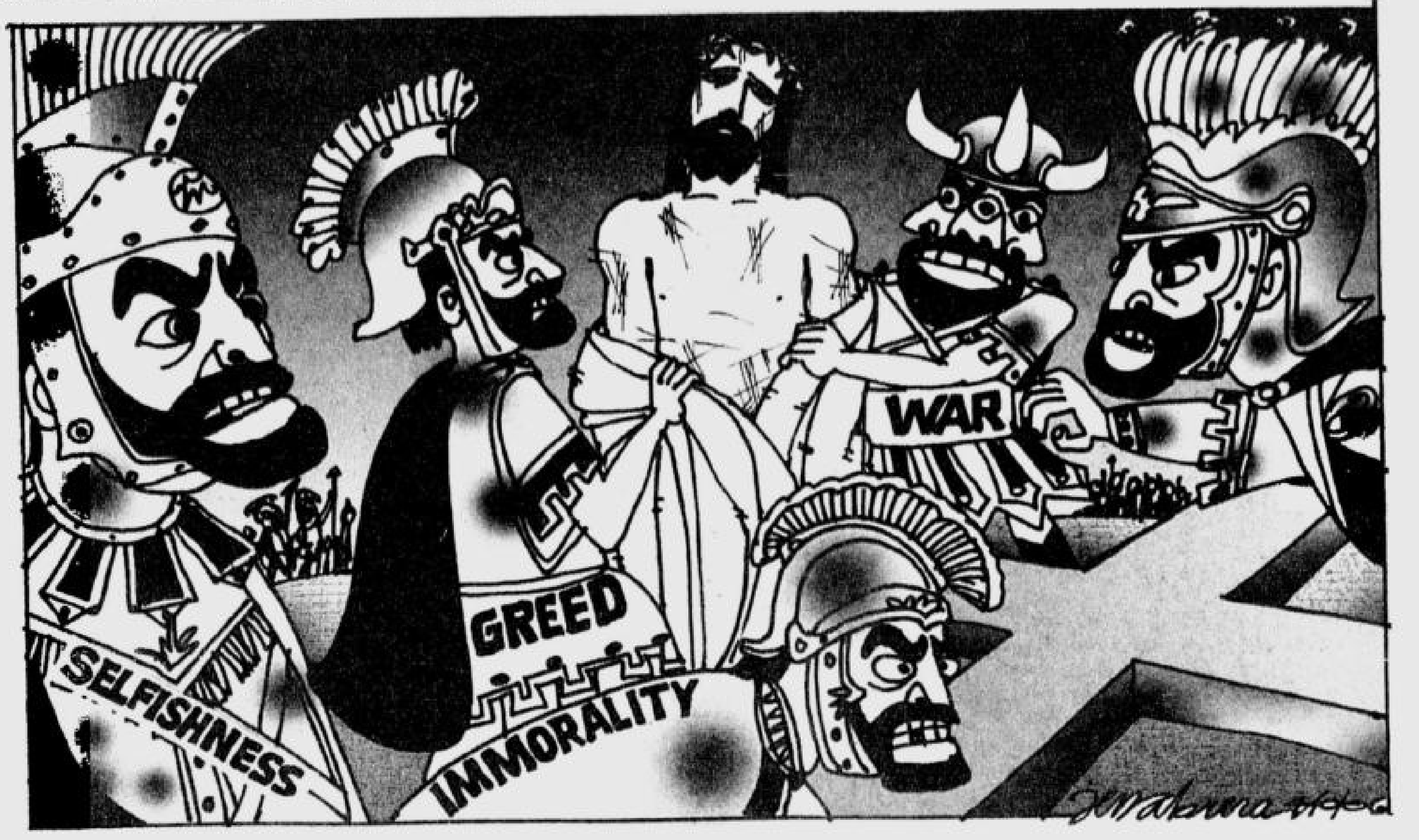

Bad news Judas

EDITORIAL

AS ANYONE SHOULD KNOW WHO HAS EVER RIDden a jeepney, a bus, or a tricycle in the Philippines (or a motorela in Mindanao), Judas is very much a part of our language and our culture. On these humble modes of transportation, one finds the ubiquitous sticker or painted sign sternly warning any passenger who may be entertaining thoughts of freeloading: "God knows Hudas [that is, 'who does'] not pay."

Judas, in other words, is a mooch. There is a certain justice to this pun, because the name of the man who sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver has been appropriated as an insult to describe people who refuse to pay what is due.

But, of course, the sign also uses the usual meaning of a Judas: one who betrays. A passenger who does not pay for his ride does not only cheat the driver of a just wage; he betrays a fellow human being. If the Judas does it out of need, he proves himself unfaithful to someone who is, in all likelihood, equally needy.

These thoughts come to mind after the dramatic announcement the other day of the first-ever publication of the so-called lost gospel of Judas. The National Geographic Society in the United States had funded the million-dollar research into the authentication and translation of a 1,700-year-old codex (an early form of book) that contains the gospel that portrays Judas Iscariot in a completely different light. According to expert opinion, the fragments of the codex are authentic and the translation is as accurate as circumstances would permit. It is the gospel's larger meaning that continues to be in dispute.

We share with many others in the Christian world a deep fascination with the new discovery (a copy of the English translation can be read and an interactive selection of the actual fragments can be accessed at www.nationalgeographic.com). National Geographic's timing couldn't be more inspired, coming as it does at the start of the Christian Holy Week. The new find's relevance for Filipinos also couldn't be more serendipitous; today the public square is thick with accusations of betrayal, the work of Judases.

A word about the discovery's limitations: The text is not the original Greek, which scholars believe was put together in the second century. It is a copy in Coptic (an ancient Egyptian language), carbon-dated to the beginning of the third century. Many of its passages are missing or could no longer be pieced together. It survived for more than 1,600 years in the Egyptian desert, but has deteriorated badly since it was discovered in the 1970s (and especially when it was kept in a safe deposit box in New York City for some 16 years). Because of its condition, the translation proceeded with great difficulty.

But the question is: What, finally, does it say about Judas? It says the apostle betrayed Jesus because Jesus told him to do so.

The key statement is Jesus' promise to Judas that, in the fullness of time, his act of betrayal will be known for what it really is: an act of obedience. "But you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me."

All the hype, the magnificent theater of the unveiling, may make a Christian accept this guarantee as a new revelation. But we shouldn't be too hasty.

In the first place, the scriptures the Christian faith accepts are not the Gnostic kind (those that promise or assume some secret knowledge); revelation is universal. The gospel of Judas is preeminently a Gnostic document, written to impress upon its original readers that some groups of Christians were privileged with knowledge unknown to others (even to Peter, the leader of the apostles). Indeed, the good news according to Judas portrays the other apostles as no more than ignorant buffoons; only Judas is the true disciple.

It is for this reason that, as early as the second century, bishops like Irenaeus of Lyons had already denounced the gospel of Judas as heretical. It certainly falls outside the tradition that led to the gathering of the books and documents that became the New Testament.

But what about the lost gospel's assertion that, somehow, in betraying Jesus, Judas was acting in accordance with God's plan? Well, what about it? "He dipped the morsel, then took it and gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. Jesus addressed himself to him, 'Be quick about what you are to do'." That's not from the apocryphal gospel of Judas, but from the canonical gospel of John. In what Christians call the economy of salvation, nothing is ever wasted—even the designs of betrayal.

A real miracle in the city

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

AS YOU MAY HAVE SEEN ON THE THREE nature television channels, animals go on regular migrations: wildebeestes, zebras, antelopes, lemmings, whales, turtles, salmons, birds, butterflies, locusts, etc. Humans, too, go on regular migrations. In the Philippines, they do this at least twice a year: during Holy Week and All Saints' Day. In fact, as you read this, the first of the annual human migrations here has started. Already, the highways leading out of Metro Manila are clogged with vehicles packed with vacationers in an exodus that rivals the biblical one. Their destinations are the beaches and the resorts away from the cities, the home provinces and—for public officials who spend public money—pleasure places overseas.

After Holy Week, the migration flow will be reversed, as the people who had rushed out the week before come rushing back to Metro Manila. The vacationers will arrive home tired, hot and dirty—and needing another vacation to rest after their "vacation" somewhere.

As I have repeatedly said here, the best place to rest and relax during Holy Week can be found right here in the city where, for the first time in many months, you will witness a real miracle—the streets of Metro Manila free of traffic (while the metropolis-based vehicles are strung out on highways outside the metropolis, the passengers sweating and cursing in the heat and wishing they had never left home). If you choose to stay, you will have the deserted streets all to yourself. Enjoy every minute of it because all too soon, the miracle will be over and the infernal traffic will be back.

* * *

This is also that time of the year when the security guards of exclusive "villages" are especially strict in letting in residents, and especially non-residents. It is because this is the time for collecting the annual vehicle sticker fee. Homeowners' associations sell stickers to motorists for easy identification at the gates. This is to allow them not only to provide better security for their members but also to raise funds to pay for the salaries of the security guards, street maintenance, lighting, cleaning and garbage collection, etc.

But there are always the tightwads who try to freeload on others. They try to get through entrance security without paying sticker fees. And so there are always the arguments at the gates.

The problem is worse in areas where residents of other villages have to pass through the streets of other villages. When more vehicles pass through a street, naturally the wear and tear on that street is faster. To raise funds for street maintenance and for security, homeowners' associations sell "pass-through" stickers. But as I said earlier, there are always those who try to freeload and refuse to pay. And so there always arise disputes between neighboring subdivisions—disputes that sometimes end up in the courts or the City Hall.

As politicians will always be politicians, there will always be among them those who will coddle the complainants by passing ordinances beneficial to them—making the freeloading problem worse.

In the first place, the problem arises because of the negligence of local government units. The government lets new subdivisions connect to the streets of previously existing subdivisions, thus allowing the former to save on development costs. As more subdivisions connect to the existing streets instead of building new ones that would link them to the main public street, the map of the area begins to look like a tree outline—with the street linking the first subdivision to the main public street as the trunk, and the streets connecting the other subdivisions to the first subdivision's street as the branches.

To make the explanation clearer, let me cite an example: Tierra Pura Homes is a village along Tandang Sora Street, just off Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City. At the end of its main street, T.M. Kalaw, is the entrance to Mira Nila Homes. The two villages are separated by the road right-of-way of the unfinished Congressional Avenue, now infested with squatters. Both subdivisions were developed by the Kalaw family. There is a right-of-way contract between the two subdivisions. Under the contract, Mira Nila paid Tierra Pura a lump sum for the use of the latter's street.

Here is where the problem begins. A number of newer subdivisions were allowed by City Hall to connect their streets to those of Mira Nila, so that besides the two entrances from the unfinished Congressional Avenue, there are four other gates leading to other subdivisions where Mira Nila has to post guards. This is a big drain on the finances of Mira Nila's homeowners' association. Almost 90 percent of the income of the association goes to the salaries of the security guards.

It would be all right if City Hall provides the policemen to secure the village, but it does not. The residents also pay for the repair and maintenance of the streets, the electric bills for the street lights, the development and maintenance of the park, the collection of garbage, etc.—amenities and services which the city government are obliged to provide in exchange for the taxes the residents pay, but for which City Hall doesn't contribute a single peso.

Where does the association get the money to pay for all those? From its residents, from fund-raising projects, from donations and from the vehicle sticker fees. But residents from neighboring subdivisions, however, have complained to City Hall about the stickers.

The income from stickers is only a very small part of the sum needed to support the community, and the association is hard put to produce the rest of the required amount. Yet, Mira Nila's neighbors are reluctant to share a small part of the burden to maintain the streets they are using. What are you going to do with such people?

There must be a God

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

CALL IT PROVIDENCE, CALL IT KARMA, CALL it Justice. But the best-laid plots of mice and tyrants oft go astray, to paraphrase Robert Burns. (As my Scottish friends, including Billy McGregor Esposo, have corrected me, that line is Burns', not Shakespeare's, my crime doubly the worse for giving unto an Englishman what is a Scotsman's.) Barely had the ink dried in the signatures Lito Atienza and the pro-Chacha kindred submitted to the Comelec than three titanic events rose to sink their project like the Titanic. All of them coming from quarters least expected.

The first was Thaksin Shinawatra resigning his post as prime minister of Thailand after consulting with his King. Thaksin who, despite having become unpopular, still won 54 percent of votes, could have insisted that the problem in his country simply lay with his critics who had no end of bad things to say about him. He could have said the problem could be solved by changing the Thai Constitution, or ending the monarchy. Instead, he admitted the problem was he himself. He called for the Thais to sacrifice for the good of the country and unite to move the country forward—and showed the way by resigning.

By contrast, GMA—despite being the most disliked leader in this country since Marcos, as the latest SWS survey shows; and who is so far being seen as an illegitimate ruler, apart from a dictatorial one—has insisted the problem merely lies with her critics who have no end of bad things to say about her. She has proposed that it be solved by changing the Constitution, the problem as she sees it being everyone and everything—except herself. She calls on Filipinos to sacrifice for the good of the country and unite to move the country forward, but refuses to do the one thing that will absolutely guarantee it, which is for her to disappear from view.

Then next day, the New York Times came out with a scathing editorial, which revealed what pretty much everyone in this country already knows, except Ignacio Bunye and the other squatters in Malacañang. The title of the editorial said it all: "Dark Days for Philippine Democracy." It stated trenchantly: "Filipinos thought they had put an end to electoral chicanery and governmental intimidation when they overthrew the Marcos dictatorship two decades ago. Unfortunately, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has completely lost touch with the ideals that inspired that 1986 'people power' movement. Mrs. Arroyo is no Ferdinand Marcos, at least not yet. But this one-time reformer is reviving bad memories of crony corruption, presidential vote-rigging and intimidation of critical journalists. Unless the Philippine Congress and courts find ways to rein in her increasingly authoritarian tendencies, democracy itself may be in danger."

Only three things are debatable in those contentions. One is that GMA was a "one-time reformer"—the only thing she reformed being her image from economist to the Nora Aunor of Philippine politics. Two is that she is not yet a Ferdinand Marcos. And three is the word "President" before her name.

Still the next day, refuting the notion that GMA should not be ousted notwithstanding that she is not the elected President because the economy has never been better, the Asian Development Bank came up with this assessment of the Philippine economy: "There is no immediate prospect of a significant improvement in the growth outlook… Investment continues to lag, while the dependence of growth on consumption and on remittance inflows limits prospects…. Unemployment remains stubbornly high (though eased somewhat by overseas work). Although generating subsequent remittance income, emigration on this scale comes at a high cost in terms of loss of knowledge and skills, and can have high social costs as well."

In but three days, these developments have thrown a monkey wrench into Ronaldo Puno et al.'s carefully contrived justification for Charter change. Thaksin has shown that the real, compelling and urgent choice for Filipinos is not between Cha-cha and no Cha-cha, it is between a ruler who has the mandate of the governed and one who does not. The New York Times has shown clearly that the real, compelling and urgent choice for Filipinos is not between a presidential or parliamentary system, it is between democracy and dictatorship. And the ADB has shown clearly that the real, compelling and urgent choice for Filipinos is not between bread and freedom but between bread and freedom on one hand, and no bread and no freedom on the other.

Mike Arroyo, Ignacio Bunye and Gabriel Claudio say that is not true at all. Mike Arroyo says it's Nene Pimentel and the other "Resign GMA" senators who should resign, not his wife. Bunye says those calling for GMA to do a Thaksin are ignorant, GMA in fact is a believer in "Thaksinomics." And Claudio says things are different here, "Pinoys feel the situation here is much brighter, (which is why) there is no outrage."

One is tempted to ask: But why should Joker Arroyo et al. resign and not GMA when they were voted into office and not GMA? If GMA is a believer in "Thaksinomics," why doesn't she follow its premise, which is that no economic policy can work unless it is carried out by someone the people trust? If Filipinos feel better under GMA than Thais under Thaksin, which is why Filipinos are not outraged, how did the SWS discover that fully 36 percent of Filipinos favor a military action to oust GMA against only 35 percent who do not and 29 percent who are neutral? That, quite incidentally, is a mind-boggling statistic, the first of its kind in this country.

But forget all this. Just ask yourself: Whom would you rather believe—Thaksin, the New York Times and the ADB, or The Three Stooges?

More on Charter change

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

BEFORE I SAY ANYTHING MORE ABOUT CHARTER change, let me congratulate the administration for appointing Rene Sarmiento to the Commission on Elections. God knows how big a dose of integrity the Comelec can use. Having worked with Rene in the past, I am confident that he will be a silver lining in the dark Comelec clouds. My only regret is that one man can probably achieve so little in a collegial body like the Comelec. But we have to start somewhere. Congratulations, Rene!

* * *

In the midst of everything that is being said about Charter change, let me just say that I am not against it. I agree with Claro M. Recto when he said: "I am not an idolater of Constitutions; I do not believe that, once proclaimed, they should forever be carved on tablets of imperishable stone beyond the reach of impious hands. On the contrary, the people should be allowed to live with their Constitution, but the caprice of the powerful should not be confused with the anxieties, the longings, the want and the will of the people."

Although I was one of the 48 women and men chosen to draft the present Constitution, I myself would like some of its provisions changed. And I do not know any member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission who would fight tooth and nail to retain every provision of the current document. But if it is to be changed at all, let us do it honorably.

At the moment, the big bone of contention is the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the campaign for Charter change via initiative and referendum. One of the obstacles to this procedure that has been raised is the Santiago v. Comelec case, which enjoins the Comelec from participating in initiative and referendum on Cha-cha until a proper enabling law is passed.

I agree with newly appointed Justice Presbitero Velasco that Supreme Court decisions, like the Constitution itself, are not written in stone. I would even add that there are very good reasons for disagreeing with the 1997 decision on initiative and referendum. It is, however, unfortunate that Justice Velasco's pronouncement is being read in some quarters as a trial balloon for the reversal of the Santiago v. Comelec decision. It is also unfortunate because the statement was ill-timed and, under present circumstances, is being read as if Velasco had been handpicked to lead the charge against the Santiago v. Comelec decision. That may not be fair at all.

While I agree that it is possible for the current Supreme Court to arrive at a different teaching, I am not sure that the Court can do it the way it reversed the earlier decision on the Mining Act. The reversal of the decision on the Mining Act was made on reconsideration within the period when reconsideration was still allowed by the Rules of Court. In the case of Santiago v. Comelec, the decision was not only made nine years ago but had also gone through a reconsideration. I doubt if it can still be the subject of reconsideration. The Court frowns on second reconsideration. It would seem to me, therefore, that if the 1997 teaching is to be reversed at all, the Court will have to be presented with a vehicle for reversal.

The Santiago v. Comelec decision still holds. It is still part of the law of the land. Until its teaching is reversed or until a new law is passed, I would imagine that the injunction against any move to use initiative and referendum for constitutional change applies not only to the Comelec but also to other government officials. It is therefore a source of wonder and even of disedification that the official charged by the Constitution to "ensure that the laws be faithfully executed" should be exhorting the people to participate in initiative and referendum toward Cha-cha. Whatever happened to the much touted rule of law? The exhortation seems to be equivalent to thumbing the nose at the Supreme Court.

The Comelec, too, seems to be thumbing its nose at the Supreme Court. I cannot see how the present signature campaign, clearly directed toward Cha-cha, cannot be covered by the 1997 injunction. The collection and verification of signatures form part and parcel of the initiative process. The collection and verification of signatures in 1997 could very well be attended to by the Comelec because then there was as yet no injunction against the Comelec. After all, anybody can collect signatures.

Another point is that initiative should come from the people and not from government. The provision introduced in the 1987 Constitution was meant to be a people-inspired remedy for inaction on the part of Congress. There are very credible reports, however, that the signature campaign is being orchestrated by government. Worse yet, there are credible reports that the signatures are not the product of informed judgment but of deceptive persuasion. Moreover, the substance of the change being sought has not been adequately explained. Officials involved in the campaign seem to be taking advantage of the poverty of people who would only be too happy to sell their signatures for a loaf of bread or a plate of rice.

I therefore join the alarm raised by the Catholic bishops in their recent pastoral letter.

Ambivalence

COMMENTARY

Jaime S. Ong

THE COUNTRY SEEMS HOPELESSLY DIVIDED these days, between those who feel Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should go because she cheated, and those who feel she should stay even though she cheated.

No one seriously believes she didn't cheat; not after the damning evidence of "Hello, Garci" and her even more telltale "I am sorry." The most her apologists can argue is that the tapes were illegally obtained and can't be used in a court of law, and that Congress has trashed the impeachment bid, and that everybody cheats anyway.

Those who say she should go enjoy the advantage of moral superiority. The irreducible argument is: at the center of the democratic process lies the vote; steal that, and you lose all legitimacy.

Those who say she should stay resent their own moral ambiguity, and so they sound petulant and testy when they raise realpolitik objections to her departure: Who will replace GMA? Are her critics any cleaner? Do they condone a coup or communist takeover? Why doesn't Cory stay home and discipline Kris?

Of these arguments, the leftist-rightist-NPA-Magdalo conspiracy sounds most hollow. To be sure, with the world communist movement in a state of collapse—China hasn't become the world's fastest-growing economy by strict adherence to Mao Zedong's thought—Filipino communists have had to rethink their cherished tenets of people's war and encirclement from the countryside, and they now seem more open to tactical shortcuts with disgruntled elements in our armed forces. But a joint venture, formalized by a memorandum of agreement, seems farfetched, particularly if the rebel leaders plot their takeover at a plush Makati village with a Time reporter recording it for posterity. Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes did not turn to Joma Sison after concluding that systemic corruption in the Navy had eaten through to the organization's core. He used his findings, first written up as a graduate school term paper four years earlier, to justify a coup.

A coup threat is more real. It is an attractive option to any field commander who traces his troops' threadbare uniforms and obsolete weapons to plundering generals, or who feels that professionalism in the AFP has been eroded by political leaders who have forfeited their mandate to govern.

But the notion of a coup, with its certain aftermath of military rule, remains abhorrent to those of us who lived through martial law and its trademark practices of warrantless arrests, media censorship and *desaparecidos*.

One evening in September 1972, I returned to the Philippines Herald office—after dinner with the other editors—to check on the next day's edition, only to find the place padlocked and ringed with soldiers. Now it's The Daily Tribune that gets raided. In the ensuing weeks of 1972, friends like Mely Nicolas and Jerry Barican were detained. Now it's Randy David's turn. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez sounds as haughty today as Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile 34 years ago; and Secretary Ignacio Bunye looks as sartorial as Secretary Kit Tatad. But it doesn't much matter whether military rule is enforced by some general in GMA's camp or some colonel who opposes her; both types draw their power not from the mandate of the ballot but from the barrel of a gun.

Still, just as odious as the prospect of GMA's ruling through some militarist cabal is the prospect of GMA replaced by discredited faces who have had their turn at the feeding trough, and are salivating to get to it once again.

For all of Cory Aquino's deficiencies as a working president, she will always deserve our thanks for uniting us after Ninoy died, and our admiration for giving up power when her term was up. But to see her today on the same side as JV Ejercito and Imee Marcos? Did we face down the tanks at Edsa to pave the way for Erap's return? We know that's not Cory's goal; but when we see the likes of Ernie Maceda and Nene Pimentel, Dinky Soliman and Linggoy Alcuaz egging us on, we recall that these people held office and wielded power in their time, and at times they were allies and at other times they were foes, and we no longer feel that their fight is our fight. We feel, more and more, like the less-than-equal animals at the conclusion of Orwell's "Animal Farm:"

> Yes, a violent quarrel was in progress. There
> were shoutings, bangings on the table, sharp
> suspicious glances, furious denials .... Twelve
> voices were shouting in anger, and they were
> all alike .... The creatures outside looked from
> pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig
> to man again, but already it was impossible to
> say which was which.

This is where GMA's claim—that she is our best and only leader—kicks in most insidiously. Conrad de Quiros and Randy David can insist that surely there are Filipinos more decent, more competent, more worthy than she; but these columnists don't quite explain where to find such people, when so many institutions—the legislature, the courts, the mass media, the church—seem so diminished and uninspiring. More to the point, in a putative democracy, leaders are elected; but what chance have we got with a Commission on Elections so tarnished by a scandalous, voided mega-contract, and an Ombudsman who won't comply with the Supreme Court's two-year-old directive to determine the Comelec's criminal liability?

With these aces up her sleeve, GMA gleefully pushes Charter change, and bills herself as the best possible leader to preside over a transition—a transition, by the way, to a parliament composed of the same discredited faces, elected on the say-so of the same disgraced Comelec. If she is our best possible leader, why bother to hold elections in 2007? Or 2010?

Of course, legitimacy will continue to be a nagging problem, but that's the whole point of EO 464, Proclamation 1017, guidelines for the media and stories of the leftist-rightist-NPA-Magdalo conspiracy.

This is where things stand today. Although GMA demeans the presidency, and the office ill suits her, as Shakespeare would say, "like a giant's robe/Upon a dwarfish thief," we have got to be convinced that she must stay on, that the alternatives are too dreadful to contemplate, that the cure is worse than the disease. But she is the disease.

Jimmy S. Ong started out as a journalist 40 years ago but martial law changed all that. He now teaches marketing management and literature at De La Salle University.

Tax withheld

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

SETTING ASIDE ALL THE "POLITICAL NOISE," the preparation of the income tax return has been a preoccupation of people prior to the Holy Week holidays. I heard someone wish that the income tax be limited to the withholding tax. Which led to another question: what evil genius thought up that tax?

The withholding tax, the glorious scheme to confiscate our earnings, we owe to American ingenuity. To be precise, we owe it to the inspired genius of Beardsley Ruml, economist, treasurer of R.H. Macy & Co. (owner of Macy's Department Store), and chair of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The story of how Ruml "invented" the withholding tax system is told in the late journalist David Brinkley's memoir of Washington, D.C. life during World War II.

As America entered the war, Brinkley tells his readers, "it became clear quickly that the war could not be fought, and certainly could not be won, without new taxes. The war bond drives had been public relations successes but financial failures. The federal budget was soaring to previously unimaginable levels: four times the size of the largest New Deal budget, three times the size of the largest World War I budget. Something had to be done. But raising taxes in the 1940s was not as simple as it looked, because the system for collecting them was not equipped for the new burdens to be placed on it."

According to Brinkley, "The old system, still in place when the war began, was this: Employed people paid taxes, in quarterly installments, not on the current year's income, but on the income they had earned the previous year. Hence, taxpayers began each year in debt to the federal government. It was up to them to find the money ... to pay last year's income taxes out of this year's income. The system worked well enough when income taxes were low (and, for most people, nonexistent)." But the war was raising taxes, and Ruml was observant enough to realize what a terrible effect this could have on ordinary people.

Continues Brinkley, "[Ruml] noticed that when [Macy's] employees retired and began living on their pensions, they found themselves in immediate financial difficulty. In the first year of living on their lower pension incomes, they had to pay taxes on the last year of their higher employment incomes. Many could not do it. Looking beyond Macy's, Ruml noted that a widow, in the year after her husband's death, had to pay his taxes but did not have his income to pay them with. And looking ahead, Ruml began to wonder what ... an employee of Macy's (or any other corporation) would do (if he left) a $7,500-a year job and began earning $50 a month in the army. He would owe taxes on his last year of civilian income and would have to pay them with the first year of his draftee's pittance."

Seeing the outrageous situation, Ruml decided to think out a solution. He brainstormed by cutting himself off from the world, reclining on a chair and letting his mind wander. He started thinking about the problem late in 1940; by spring of 1941, he had—in a flash of brilliance—hit on a solution: "pay-as-you-go," he called it, and "It was all quite simple, but also revolutionary: let everyone pay this year's taxes this year by having the money deducted from paychecks before he ever sees it. Then, everyone would start each year clean, free of debt."

The idea was a hit. His friends, to whom he first broached the idea at a dinner, loved it, and so did the Senate and House finance committees. But then the idea began to face opposition from—of all places—the White House and the Treasury Department. The problem was that "To begin a new year cleanly with a pay-as-you-go system, Ruml argued, it would be necessary to forgive the taxes for the previous year. Otherwise, people would have to pay two years of taxes in one year; an impossible burden for many." Not much of a problem, you might think, except that the New Dealers in the Treasury and around Franklin D. Roosevelt thought that writing off one year's worth of income taxes would prove intolerably advantageous to the rich. This was an administration, after all, which actually considered limiting all wartime incomes to $25,000 per annum (a figure, the staunchly Republican Chicago Tribune sniffed at because it was the most money FDR ever managed to earn until he became president).

A noisy debate ensued, within the administration of FDR and in the papers. In his memoir, Brinkley drily observes that "Democracy was at work, producing paralysis." Eventually, in good-old American fashion, a compromise was reached: "Congress produced a bill that included a year's forgiveness for lower-income people, and only a partial forgiveness for the wealthy." The irony was, as Ruml's supporters pointed out, "no one would benefit from the amnesty until the last year of their working life." But at last, it was done, and the new system was signed into law on July 1, 1943. A system, more or less, we now owe to Uncle Sam.

As Brinkley sums it up in his memoir, "Beardsley Ruml, from his locked room and his overstuffed chair, had produced a revolution in American public finance. When people became accustomed to paying taxes as they had always paid for automobiles—on the installment plan—Congress and president learned, to their pleasure, what automobile salesmen had learned long before: that installment buyers could be induced to pay more because they looked not at the total but only at the monthly payments. And in this case there was, for government, the added psychological advantage that people were paying their taxes with not much resistance because they were paying with money they had never even seen. The term 'take-home pay' now entered the language."

Parliament-in-waiting

COMMENTARY

Manny E. Valdehuesa Jr.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE DEFINES THE BARANGAY as ... the basic political unit ... the primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programs, projects, and activities in the community, and as a forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, crystallized and considered, and where disputes may be amicably settled. (Sec. 384, Role of the Barangay, RA 1760)

This definition underscores the barangay's importance to the entire polity. It is meant to be the primary planning and implementing unit of every community. It is supposed to provide the forum for issues that affect the citizens so that their views may be elicited and ascertained. And it is to resolve disputes in the neighborhoods. These are vital tasks for every community and for nation-building. Major problems arise if they are not performed; and they cannot be performed at macro levels. To insist on addressing them in the aggregate compounds the issues and multiplies the problems.

As already stated, the barangay has powers similar to those of the upper levels of government, with the requisite personnel budget, equipment pool, enforcement power and the like. It also has three branches: executive, legislative, judicial—but all three are presided over by one and the same official: the barangay chair. He is chief executive, chair of his barangay's Lupong Tagapamayapa (judicial body) and chair of the Sangguniang Barangay (legislative body).

The principle of separation of powers does not apply to this parliamentary form of government; thus the barangay has no built-in checks and balances to assure transparency or accountability. In order to temper the chair's exercise of his powers, as a check against abuse, the code provides a potent body to keep him accountable and subject to scrutiny by his peers. This body is the barangay assembly, the parliament of the community. Its mandate is to convene at least twice yearly—in order to "hear and pass" upon the semestral report of the Sangguniang Barangay concerning its activities and finances.

The deliberations of the assembly exemplify the direct democracy practiced in Ancient Greece or, in our time, in the Israeli kibbutz or the Swiss canton. Any member may raise or debate issues (as in Congress). He may initiate or propose legislation, sponsor a resolution, set funding priority and review the barangay's programs and finances. Not least, any member can question or move to nullify acts and decisions of their officials.

These are real powers that every citizen of the republic possesses. Thus, strange as it may sound, every adult Filipino is in fact a government official, a "member of parliament" in his community. The extent to which every Filipino asserts or wields these powers determines the conduct of government in the community and, by extension, the nation.

With an all-inclusive body of citizens in attendance, the barangay assembly is like a stockholders' meeting. And because these stockholders are the sovereign people themselves, the meeting is literally a constituent assembly, a gathering of constituents, unlike the one in Congress if its two chambers convene jointly to amend the Constitution. (Congressmen and senators are mere proxies or agents of their constituents.) During the deliberations at barangay assemblies, any member may speak or act in his own right as a sovereign citizen.

Thus, the decision or action of assemblage is a concrete expression of sovereignty. Its resolution is a direct mandate from the principals of the republic—the will of the people in the community. This will is what creates and legitimizes government and determines its nature or conduct.

Given the importance of these acts and processes, it follows that the barangay assembly ought to be convened with all due preparation and solemnity—with a formal agenda, records made and filed for ready reference, minutes taken and distributed, parliamentary rules of order and ritual ceremony. Even frivolous social clubs observe these formalities in their meetings. Much more should they be observed for this rite of sovereignty and the rubric of democracy.

People who insist on going to the plaza or the media to express a grievance ought to realize that they could just as well do it in their community by convening the barangay assembly, there to pass a resolution or manifesto that bears the stamp of the people's sovereignty and authority. There is nothing to prevent this constituent assembly from taking up larger issues that today are discussed only in elite bodies like the House of Representatives and the Senate. Why shouldn't the sovereign people of the barangay deliberate on or discuss a national issue and pronounce itself on it?

But somehow no one bothers to see to its formal convening. Not the government, not civil society, not the community. On occasion, the Department of Interior and Local Government calls for it to convene; but the call is usually for purposes other than matters that directly concern its members, and the agenda is dictated by Malacañang or the DILG, not by the membership. This cavalier handling of a constituent assembly demeans its sovereign nature and the essential role of citizens in the democratic process.

The barangay assembly deserves to be treated with great importance. Being the people's parliament, it must serve as the dynamo of the community—providing policy, direction and mandate to the Sangguniang Barangay which meets more frequently to handle the workaday requirements of legislation or decision-making. The *sanggunian* is akin to a board of directors that acts on behalf of the stockholders.

Provided the barangay assembly is operational, there is no reason why people should feel powerless, voiceless or cutoff from their government. Being a member of his community's supreme governing body, every Filipino can take part in shaping the conduct of his government, establish performance standards, compel proper behavior and set the tone for the higher levels. He can do this because the upper levels get their mandates from him and his fellow barangay assembly members who—if they would—can adopt remedial measures through initiative and referendum.

Direct democracy with a parliamentary government is what makes the barangay unique and special—a fact that moved a member of the 1987 Constitutional Commission to characterize its unique legislative governing body as the "official version of People Power."

Manny Valdehuesa Jr. is a farmer from Cagayan de Oro and a book publisher. Before that, he was a UN executive. This write-up is an excerpt from his new book, "Trapo Governance and the Cha Cha Conspiracy."

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Is 'every day' a problem, too?

MANY YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS STILL ACTIVE in teaching English and journalism to high school students, I took charge of the school's annual spelling bee.

Two of the perennial words in our spelling contests were "every day" as an adverb of time, and "everyday" as an adjective.

Today, I feel like giving up, but it keeps coming back to haunt me. I watch the evening news and the advertisers plug for their health drinks **everyday**.

I go over my grandnephew's reading books in prep school, and the sentences leap out saying "I do this, I do that **everyday**."

I go over a children's book subsidized by a leading bank to celebrate its 130 years in the country, and it says "From that day on, **everyday**, Laya would wake up earlier than usual."

I go over the March 26 Sunday issue of the INQUIRER, and the headline story on GMA's tough speech at the PMA graduation rites quotes her as saying that we live by outmoded ideology devoid of the values "you love and die for **everyday**."

When I turn to the Lifestyle section I find the word misspelled four times in Josephine Darang's Purely Personal column—"'Gospa' asks for prayer and fasting for world peace"—in Paragraph 2: "Praying the Rosary **everyday**."

Paragraph 3: "During the first few years when the Virgin Mary came **everyday**..."

Paragraph 7: "...when I came back, I went to Mass **everyday**."

Paragraph 13: "...to answer the call to pray the Rosary **everyday**."

In all these instances cited, the word is used as an adverb of time, hence it should have been spelled as two words **every day**.

In the "Philippine Daily Inquirer Stylebook" (1993) by Isagani Yambot and Cristina Hidalgo Pantoja, the distinction between the adverb and the adjective is given on Page 38.

I know usage dictates language and what is a no-no today may be in the dictionary years later. So, will somebody please tell me if there is no longer any distinction between the two spellings? Or is it only in the Philippines where this problem exists?

—EUFEMIA C. ESTRADA,
Mercedes I, 39 Annapolis,
San Juan, Metro Manila

We stand corrected. Thank you for bringing the lapses to our attention. Please keep monitoring.—Ed.

IF you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@ inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES
Ang Bangkong May Damdaming-Bayan
1598 M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. J. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 522-0000; 526-0100 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the projects as stated below:

ITB No.	Item / Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2006-038	28 units ECCS Reader Plus Two (2) years Maintenance Services	P 6,720,000.00	LBP Funds
2006-076	20 units 6KVA Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS)	P 2,200,000.00	LBP Funds
2006-078	654 pcs. 14K Gold Ring (for 15 Years Service Awardees)	P 5,803,596.00	LBP Funds

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

Bidding for the above requirements is scheduled on **May 3, 2006** at 1:00 PM and pertinent Bid Documents may be obtained from the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila, **upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00 per ITB.**

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on **April 20, 2006 (ITB No. 2006-038 - 1:30 pm, ITB No. 2006-076 - 3:00 pm and ITB 2006-078 - 9:00 am)** at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to **Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract** shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of **RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).**

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare the bidding a failure or waive any required formality therein and make an award to the bidder whose bid is the most advantageous to the Bank.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI - April 10 & 17, 2006)

VICTORIAS
MILLING COMPANY, INC.

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

VICTORIAS MILLING COMPANY, INC., Victorias City, Negros Occidental wishes to invite interested bidders/contractors to pre-qualify and to bid for the TURNKEY PROJECT of retro-fitting VMC's 3.5 MW GE "A" Diactor AVR and Rotating Exciter covered by JR No. 4736B dated March 27, 2006 under CAPEX No. ELE-01-20-06A.

Interested bidders should submit technical specifications and conduct technical presentation for evaluation of the Electrical Operations Division anchored on the following Equipment Specifications:

1. Shunt Static Exciter
2. Rating Continuous 264 Amperes DC
3. Forcing Current 380 Amperes DC
4. Regulation 1-1/2%
5. Response less than 50 Milliseconds
6. Under-Frequency Compensation
7. 50% Ambient Temperature
8. Microprocessor-Based Controller with Protection-Control Monitoring

Interested bidders must submit the following requirements:
- Letter of intent with Interest to Bid
- VMC Accreditation papers for those who are not yet accredited
- Registered and in good standing with SEC or DTI
- Certificate of Registration with BIR
- Certificate of Membership with SSS, Philhealth, HDMF, Pag-ibig, etc.
- Certificate from Department of Labor and Employment
- Has a good track record and satisfactory performance as attested to by at least three (3) clients
- Latest audited Financial Statements stamped by BIR and certified by a Certified Public Accountant

Kindly submit the needed requirements on or before April 18, 2006 to qualify to conduct a technical presentation. Otherwise, you will not be allowed to participate in the Commercial Bidding that will be announced later.

For further inquiries, please contact **Messrs. Carlos S. Quiatchon or Dan C. Labrador** at VMC Millsite at telephone numbers **(034) 399-3696 to 97** and (local) **2351 or 2309**, and **Mr. Ernesto "Toto" Oligo** at VMC Makati Office at telephone numbers **(02)899-0485** and **(02)890-7061**. Also visit our website www.victoriasmilling.com and e-mail us at mcd@victoriasmilling.com.

Victorias Milling Company, Inc., reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the Company. The Company assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidder/s for any expense/s or loss that they.may incur in the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) **TERESITA V. ILAGAN**
Chairperson, Senior Bidding Committee

(PDI - April 10, 2006)

God's plan and GMA's goal

I NOW KNOW WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN for President Macapagal-Arroyo. It is to make us laugh during these trying times.

I had a good laugh when GMA claimed that the exodus of Filipino workers to other countries is not due to the desperate situation in the country. There's no doubt that Filipino workers are skilled and talented. And they surely would have used their skills for our country if there had been enough job opportunities for them. How many families have been torn apart due to the migration of workers abroad? How many Filipinos have been imprisoned or have died abroad? Yes, many of our countrymen have risked their lives, suffered loneliness and forfeited precious time with their children because they have no future here.

President Arroyo must share the blame for this exodus of our workers. Her much-vaunted economic intellect and the government's resources have not been used to solve the unemployment and underemployment problem. Instead, she has used her power to misspend government funds to ensure her political survival and buy the loyalty of generals and local officials.

—RAFFY REY HIPOLITO,
policy advocacy officer,
FoodFirst Information
& Action Network (FIAN)-Philippines,
9B Matulungin St., Barangay Central,
Quezon City

Not the cause of heavy traffic in Baclaran

THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO ANNAbelle Ramirez's letter, "Misplaced Pasay terminal." (PDI, 2/9/06)

The Traffic and Parking Management Office (TPMO) is one of those involved in the beautification of Pasay City. We, therefore, feel elated to know that Ramirez appreciates one of the city's beautification projects—that is, the installation of colored and decorative streetlights along Roxas Boulevard.

But we are bothered by her unfounded observation that some "unscrupulous individuals" have turned a stretch of a service road near Heritage Hotel into a public terminal.

The stretch of that service road she referred to is not a public terminal. It is just a designated area for loading and unloading passengers. Ramirez is therefore wrong to say the place is being used as a "terminal" and is the cause of traffic in Baclaran. Her observation is baseless.

The traffic situation in Baclaran is normally very tight, especially on Wednesdays, because of the thousands of devotees who regularly go to the church there. Ramirez should have checked whether the place is indeed a terminal or not before she made her insinuations. As a policy, the mayor does not allow the opening of new bus and jeepney terminals in Pasay City because they usually cause traffic jams.

However, may I assure Ramirez that the TPMO will look into her complaint; and, if necessary, assign more traffic enforcers to the area to ease the traffic condition there.

—FLORENCIO C. MATEO,
chief, Traffic and Parking
Management Office,
Edsa, Tramo, Pasay City

Gov't should stay out of the way of professionals going abroad

RAUL PANGALANGAN WROTE A great column which gave a clear and convincing position about the Filipino professional's right to travel and find employment abroad. (PDI, 3/24/06) I agree with his analysis 100 percent. We all know that the Philippine government is rudderless and our leaders are currently busy trying to launch or defend against the next coup d'etat.

The government is unable to provide decent jobs, health care and other services to its people. Because of these failures, the best thing that the government can do right now is to stay out of the way. The best thing that it can do is not to mind its people who are dreaming of a better life for themselves and their families. The more than $10 billion sent by overseas Filipinos to the country every year practically keeps our economy afloat and provides a better credit rating for our government. These dollar remittances also enhance the opportunity for our officials to get more loans and pocket a good portion of them.

Our overseas workers finance education and health care needs and other costs of living for millions of Filipinos, especially those living in the countryside. They also offer a great deal of "social remittance" to their families by sharing what they've learned abroad and inspiring the next generation of young kids to value education, hard work and excellence.

—REY ROSALES,
bomborey@yhaoo.com

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO SUBMIT LETTER OF INTENT

The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) is hereby inviting prospective bidders to submit their Letter of Intent to Finance, Design, and Construct the planned 7.5-km EDSA North Transit (ENT) Project from North Avenue to NorthRail Caloocan Station through the Solicited Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) Scheme. The project will be implemented immediately after NEDA ICC approval.

The proposed bidding shall be governed by the BOT Law (RA 7718) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Submission of Letter of Intent shall be not later than 2 May 2006 addressed to The Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee, DOTC at Unit 61, 6th Floor, The Columbia Tower, Ortigas Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila.

(Sgd.) ROBERT R. CASTAÑARES
BAC Chairman

(PDI–April 10, 17 & 24, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
City Government of Zamboanga
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
City Hall, Zamboanga City
Tel. No.: (062) 992 7763
Solicitation No.: CW-06-0403-064

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Construction / Rehabilitation of Public Market Building (Main) R-G, Zone IV, ZC
(Name of Project)

Construction of R.C. Building divided into cubicles with roll-up doors calling for demolition of existing structure earthwork (excavation), concrete, reinforcing bars, masonry, roofing, plumbing works, installation of doors, windows, and steel grill, panting and electrical works.
(Brief Description of Works)

1. The **CITY GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBOANGA** through the General Fund [AB] FY-2005 intends to apply the sum of **FIVE MILLION ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN THOUSAND SEVENTY TWO AND 87/100 PESOS (P5,119,072.87) ONLY** being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for **Construction / Rehabilitation of Public Market Building (Main) R-G, Zone IV, ZC.** Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.
2. The **CITY GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBOANGA** now calls for the submission of Letter of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for ***Construction of R.C. Building divided into cubicles with roll-up doors calling for demolition of existing structure earthwork (excavation), concrete, reinforcing bars, masonry, roofing, plumbing works, installation of doors, windows, and steel grill, panting and electrical works.*** Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type and cost of contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC and to meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs on or before **April 18, 2006** at Procurement, Acquisition and Awards Office, City Hall, Zamboanga City and secure the Eligibility Documents there from. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day of the submission of the accomplished eligibility Documents shall be on the date of the opening of Eligibility Documents on **April 19, 2006** at 10:00 A.M. in the Procurement, Acquisition and Awards Office, City Hall, Zamboanga City. Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act" and is restricted unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.
4. Interested Bidders shall submit their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the BAC Secretariat at Procurement, Acquisition and Awards Office, City Hall, Zamboanga City on or before **April 19, 2006 at 10:00 A.M.**
5. Interested Eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the **CITY GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBOANGA** and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from **8:00 am to 5:00pm, starting April 24 to May 2, 2006.**
6. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidder that passed the eligibility check upon the presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **P3,000.00** The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative on or before **May 3, 2006** at 10:00 A.M.
7. The **CITY GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBOANGA** will hold a **Pre-Bid Conference** open to all Eligible Bidders on **May 4, 2006** at 10:00 A.M. in the City Engineer's Office, Conference Room, City Hall, Zamboanga City
8. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before **May 17, 2006** at **10:00AM.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of **Cash, Check, Certified Check, Cashier's Check, Manager's Check** payable to the City Treasurer **Bank Draft, Irrevocable Letter of Credit** and in an amount of **P51,190.73** or **Bank Guarantee** in the amount of **P76,786.00** or **Surety Bond** in the amount of **P127,976.82** or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on **May 17, 2006** at **10:00AM.** Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at 10:00 A.M. in the City Engineer's Office, Conference Room, City Hall, Zamboanga City
9. Completion of the Works is required by **One Hundred Ten [110]** calendar days.
10. The **CITY GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBOANGA** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Procurement, Acquisition and Awards Division
Milagros WS. Saavedra
City Hall, N S. Valderosa Street
Zamboanga City
Tel No.: (062) 991-0882
Telefax No.: (062) 992-7763

(Sgd.) **Dr. MARIO D. ARRIOLA**
BAC Chairman

(PDI–April 3 & 10, 2006)

Unfair to Norvasc

WE SEE THE NEED TO ISSUE A CLARIFICAtory statement relative to the column, "Why Filipinos are dropping dead" (PDI, 4/3/06), of Neal C. Cruz.

1. The claim that people are dying of complications from hypertension because they can't afford to buy Norvasc is unfair. Norvasc is not the only medicine for hypertension. There are many other anti-hypertensive medicines available in the market, many of which are off-patent. These off-patent medicines are manufactured locally and sold at low prices.

2. Our Intellectual Property Code (RA 8293) grants patent protection for 20 years for inventors and researchers as an incentive for them to continue investing time, effort and money to develop new products. Weakening patent protection can stifle research and innovation, thereby diminishing the frequency of the introduction of new, innovative medicines into the market.

3. The issue between Pfizer and the Philippine International Trading Center—on the latter's application for registration of a Norvasc parallel import—has been discussed in a meeting between PITC president Roberto Pagdanganan and officers of the Pharmaceutical & Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), with the objective of resolving differences in an amicable way, taking into account the needs and concerns of both sides.

4. Cruz was right when he wrote that "other companies are free to manufacture their own generic versions" upon expiry of a patent. This is what happens in the local pharmaceutical market. And this is also the reason why there are hundreds of low-priced medicines in the market. Patients simply need to be informed that they can actually choose an affordable generic equivalent to a prescribed medicine.

5. Cruz also suggested that the government import cheap medicines. If the objective is to supply the market with cheap medicines, the government may import raw materials for distribution to local manufacturers, or import in bulk processed medicines to be packed locally and distributed through normal distribution channels. This is the way to supply cheap medicines to the public. This is precisely the approach taken by other countries to reduce medicine prices.

6. We also believe that promoting generic medicines provides a less expensive alternative for the Filipino people.

—LEO P. WASSMER JR.,
executive vice president and CEO,
Pharmaceutical & Healthcare
Association of the Philippines,
Unit 502, One Corporate Plaza,
845 Pasay Road, Makati City

Silent majority's message for 'trapos'

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED READING SOLITA Monsod's column titled "Why people are not out on the streets." (PDI, 3/25/06) She hit the nail right on the head!

Our politicians should be working how to improve the lives of Filipinos—that's what they were elected for; people expect them to do something positive and constructive, not just find fault in each other. Why can't they help to strengthen the economy, solve the drug problem, improve the quality of education and promote Philippine tourism, etc.? There are so many problems that they can solve. If they think Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should not be the President, they should wait for the next election, then let's find out who really deserves to be there in Malacañang.

What are the oppositionists doing right now? They are just driving away tourists who want to come here, and the *balikbayans* who want to spend the remaining years of their lives in their land of birth.

Our politicians should stop grandstanding!

—LUZ SUPLIDO, suplido@ite.net

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Resort boom exacting toll on Boracay Island

By Hazel P. Villa
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—THOUSANDS of construction workers employed by big resorts are taxing the carrying capacity of the famed Boracay Island that can pose problems in terms of services, according to an official of the Department of Tourism in Western Visayas (DOT-6).

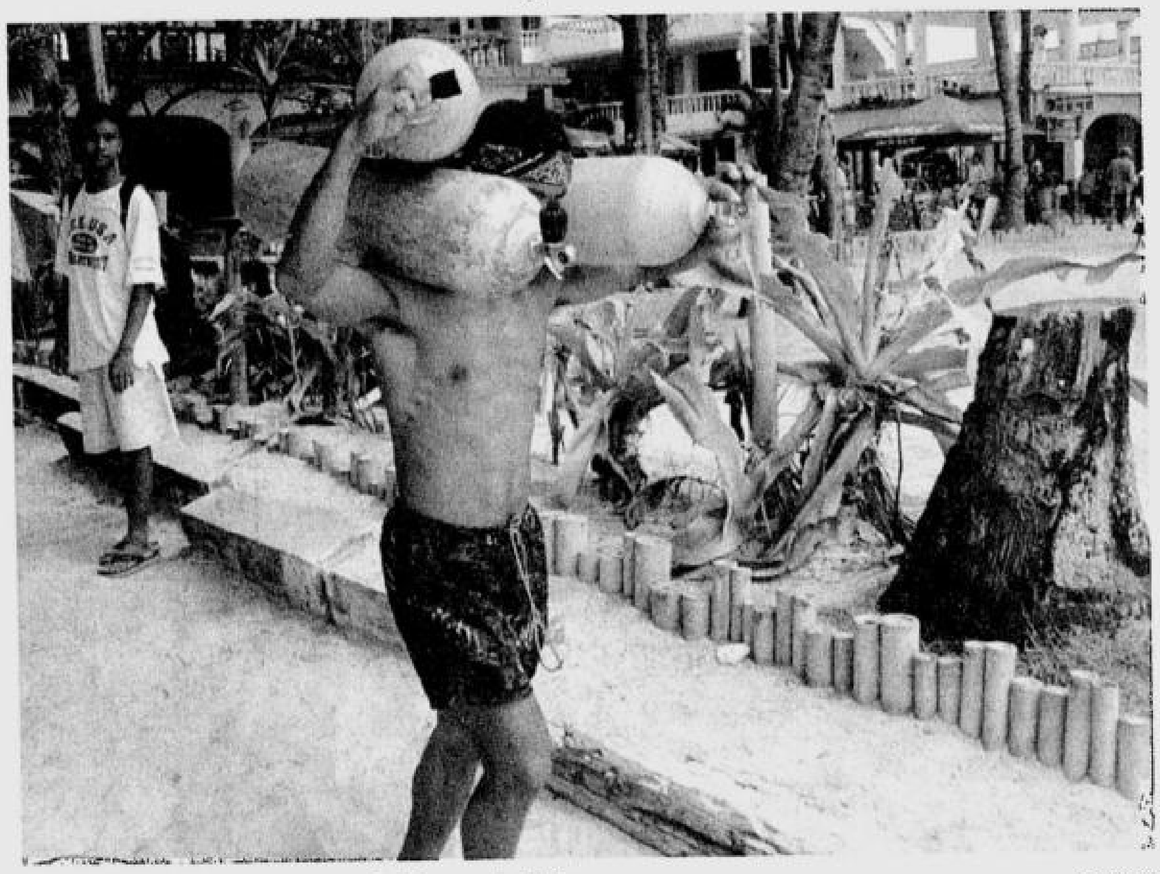
Edwin Trompeta, DOT-6 director, said Boracay's carrying capacity is affected by people who have no business staying there.

These include carpenters and construction workers from the cities of Cebu and Iloilo who work for a time and opt to permanently stay on the island, he added.

"Construction workers staying in Boracay and not going home is an additional problem on the island in terms of services, housing, lighting, and use of facilities as well as peace and order," he said.

Demographers define carrying capacity as the maximum "load" that people and their needs can safely impose on the environment.

Trompeta expressed concern on the more than 2,000 construction workers of Shangri-La Hotel, which is now constructing a P2.2-billion project as well as the international resort company Discovery Shore that will begin construction at the main beach area near Station 1.



WORKERS like these opt to stay in Boracay for jobs. PDI PHOTO

"One-fourth of these construction workers who do not go home would be an additional problem on the island," said Trompeta.

Contrary to common belief, he said the tourists are not the ones who tax the island's carrying capacity because they only come on a seasonal basis.

He cited the case of Fairways and Bluewaters Resort that began construction in the late 1990s and employed about 3,000 workers at any given time, most of whom decided to stay for good and make a living in Boracay.

Trompeta said there was no system of controlling construction workers in Boracay who did not even have identification cards from the companies they were working with.

The lack of a Tourism Development Authority (TDA) hampers the regulation of development on the island because the activities of these groups are not coordinated, he added.

Trompeta had proposed the creation of the TDA in 2001, which would "manage, operate, control, plan, and implement the regulations on the island just like the Subic Bay Development Authority."

"Until we get that authority in there, I have doubts about the sustainability of the island," said Trompeta who said he pitched the idea to business groups and Aklan's leaders, but was ignored.

Ecija prosecutor shoots dead father's killer

By Luige A. del Puerto

THEY BROUGHT THE MAN who had allegedly accidentally killed his father to his office, and he shot him dead.

San Jose City, Nueva Ecija prosecutor Gerardo Hermogenes took the law into his own hands and killed Jordan Viscara, 38, at noon Friday, according to reports reaching Camp Crame yesterday.

Apparently, Viscara was facing a case of reckless imprudence resulting in homicide. His victim had been the fiscal's father, Romeo Hermogenes, the police alleged.

Viscara was brought to the fiscal's office in Barangay F.E. Marcos to be investigated on the reckless imprudence case, the police said.

"While the victim was inside the office, Prosecutor Gerardo Hermogenes drew his firearm and shot the victim [at] close range several times," a police report said.

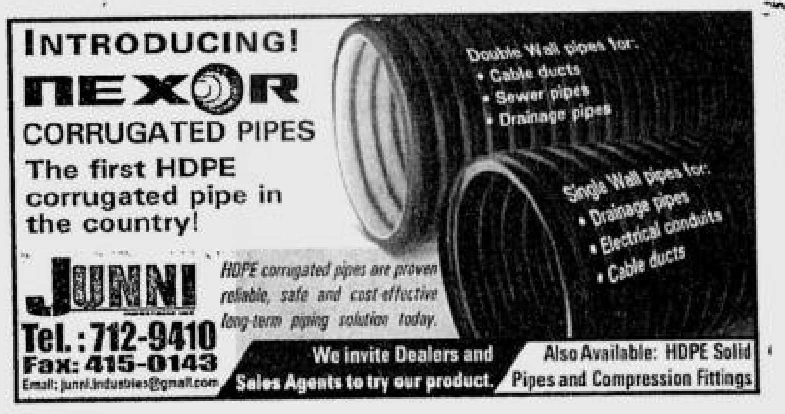
The police immediately took Hermogenes into their custody. The prosecutor is now facing charges of murder, the police report said.

The police report, however, failed to explain a few questions.

Why, for one, was Viscara brought to Hermogenes and not to another city prosecutor, if the victim had been a suspect in the elder Hermogenes' untimely death?

Last Friday, a prosecutor was gunned down in Butuan City while on board a multi-cab, which was on its way to Nasipit, Agusan del Norte.

The assassin was inside the same vehicle. When they reached Barangay Dumalagan in Buenavista town, the assassin took out his gun and shot dead Prosecutor Godofredo Pacenio Jr.



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No need to declare Holy Week ceasefire—Ka Roger

LUCENA CITY—NEW PEOPLE'S Army guerrillas are not inclined to declare a ceasefire in deference to the traditional observance of Holy Week, according to communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal.

"The NPA does not have to declare a ceasefire for the Holy Week. Anyway, our Red fighters are not inclined to stage offensives especially amid the customary religious observance of the masses. We rest our guns by tradition," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview.

He added: "Holy Week is sacred to the masses. This is one moment for them to pray and meditate and we respect that."

However, Rosal quickly clarified that should the rebels see the need to launch attacks, they would target only the "legitimate enemy—the military."

Rosal maintained that the guerrillas would be on a "tactical defensive mode" but "ready to retaliate once provoked."

"If the enemies will provoke us, of course, the NPA will retaliate and defend themselves," he explained.

In recent years, the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines have called separately for unilateral ceasefire during the Christmas and New Year holidays to allow for peaceful celebrations.

Neither party has observed truce during Holy Week on April 10-16.

Rosal said the NPA leadership even encouraged its members to join the "Pabasa," the traditional reading of the "Pasyon" which depicts the life and death of Christ, whenever one was being held in a "rebel-controlled" area. But he said the reading was prohibited inside their camp. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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1 pc. McBride Eye Pad - sterile
1 pc. McBride Triangular Bandage
1 pc. McBride Elastic Bandage size 4x5 yds.
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1 btl. Aromatic Spirit of Ammonia
1 pc. Burn Ointment
1 pc. Plaster 1x5 (2.5 x 1m)
1 pc. Ice Bag #6
1 pack Instant Cold Pack
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Cebu vessel catches fire; no one hurt

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—FIRE BROKE OUT AT THE rooftop of a Cebu-based passenger-cargo vessel early yesterday morning while on its way to Ormoc City, Leyte.

No one was hurt among the 801 passengers including 11 infants after the crew of MV Heaven Star of Roble Shipping Lines managed to put out the fire.

They made it to their destination at about 2:45 a.m. when the vessel docked Ormoc port, said Senior Coast Guard officer Lemuel Alqueza, assistant district commander of Philippine Coast Guard in Ormoc.

He said MV Heaven Star was also allowed to return to Cebu but without any passenger so the vessel could be repaired here.

The INQUIRER tried but failed to get comments from officials of Roble Shipping Lines.

An initial report showed that the fire broke out at about 1:18 a.m., or about three hours after the vessel left Cebu port, while MV Heaven Star was about nine nautical miles off Mirada, Leyte.

Alqueza said the fire was caused by overheating of the smoke stack at the sundeck and spread to the economy accommodation rooftop, which was made of fiberglass.

"The fire broke out at the back portion of the vessel. The initial report we got was [that] everything was placed under control several minutes after the fire broke out. The crew was quick to put out the fire and advised the passengers not to panic," he said.

Alqueza said the Coast Guard district office in Cebu would conduct an investigation after Rodulfo Saavedra, MV Heaven Star skipper, told them yesterday that they would file the marine protest here.

"The Special Board of Marine Inquiry is there and the vessel's captain said they would file the marine protest in Cebu so we would let our district in Cebu conduct the investigation," he said.

Lt. Commander Erwin Balagas, chief of staff of the Philippine Coast Guard Eastern-Central Visayas district, said they would conduct a preliminary investigation of the incident.

3 fires hit Quezon, Batangas

LUCENA CITY—TWO SEPARATE FIRES burned a school building and a five-hectare portion of a forest in Quezon province Saturday and Sunday.

Fire of still unknown origin gutted down a building of the Claro M. Recto High School, a public school in Tiaong, Quezon, 94 km southeast of Manila, early dawn Sunday, a police report said.

PO1 Marlo Oliveros of the Tiaong Municipal Police Office said the fire started at around 2:30 a.m. inside the faculty room and burned the main school building located at Barangay Quipot.

Burned during the two-hour fire were tables, school chairs, school supplies and equipment.

The timely arrival of firefighters, assisted by responding firemen from neighboring towns, helped prevent the fire from spreading to the nearby houses.

No casualty was reported in the incident.

Meanwhile, a forest fire of still unknown origin burned five hectares of bamboo shrubs atop Mount Cristobal facing Dolores, Quezon, about 98 km southeast of Manila, late Saturday afternoon, according to Dolores municipal environment and natural resources officer Manny Calayag.

He told the INQUIRER that the fire started at around 5 p.m. and lasted until after midnight.

Calayag said they were not able to reach the burning site.

"The climb is too steep. The whirling wind helped in putting out the fire naturally, he said.

He added: "But if the spread of the fire continued, we were ready to create fire lines to prevent the flame from spreading and reach the forested area."

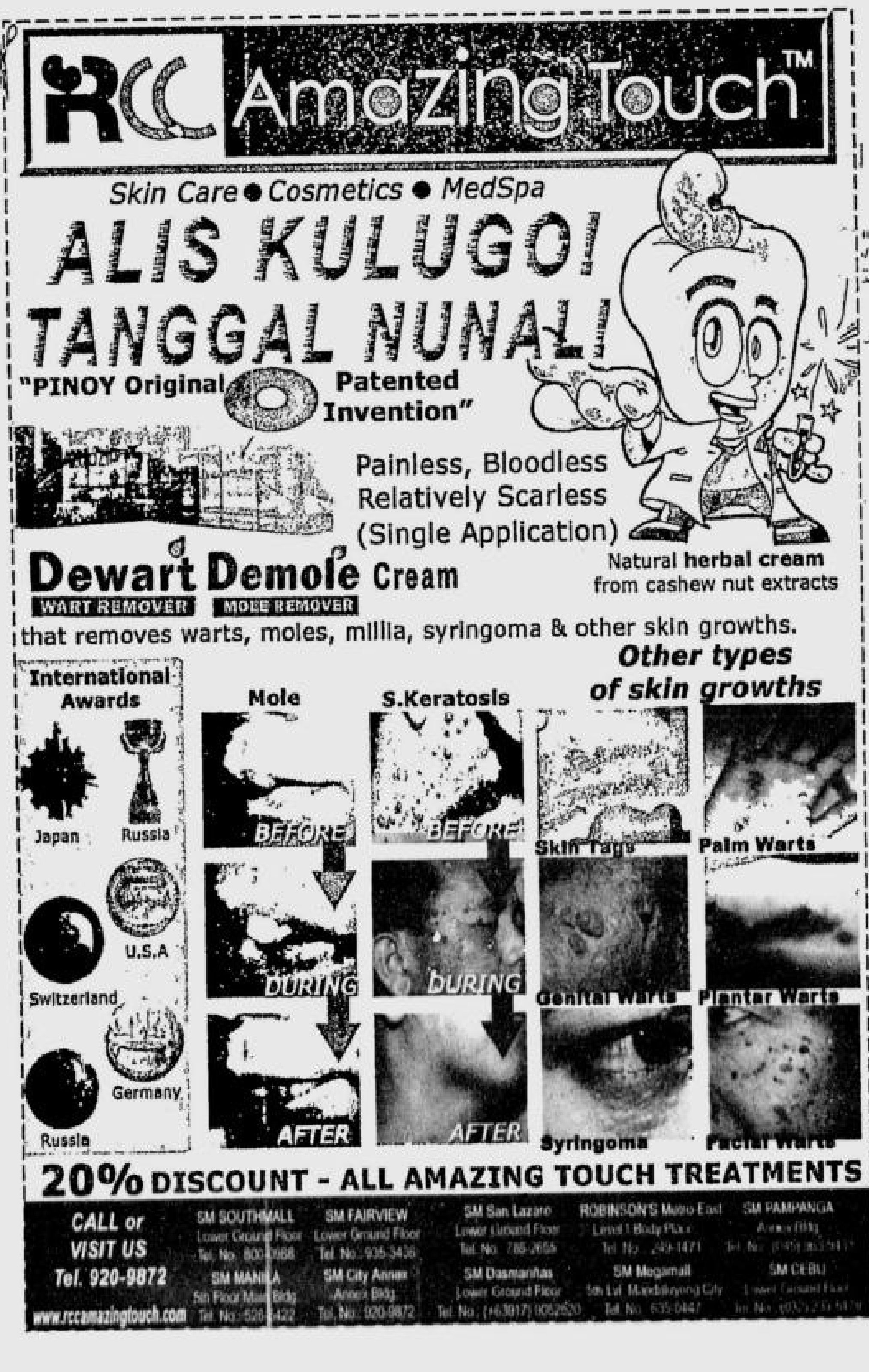
Calayag said they were still investigating the cause of the fire.

Mount Cristobal connects to the mystical mountain of Banahaw, which occupies part of Quezon and Laguna provinces.

Banahaw is considered sacred by thousands of devotees, especially during Lent.

In Batangas City, patients and staff of the Batangas Regional Hospital panicked when a 25-minute fire burned its laboratory section on Saturday noon. Insp. Von Ferdinand Nicasio, chief of the Bureau of Fire Protection in Batangas City, said the fire started at about 12 noon after a paraffin wax being heated by resident medical technologist Nonato Coliat burned.

He said Coliat had left the laboratory apparently to get his lunch. The fire then engulfed the exhaust fan beside it and destroyed the air-conditioned laboratory room located at the basement of the one-story building before it was finally put out by alert hospital staffers. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr. and Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



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Iloilo groups move against people's initiative

By Nestor Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—VARIOUS GROUPS ON Thursday launched their own signature campaign to oppose the move to amend the Constitution through a people's initiative.

Members of the Ilonggos' Movement Against Arroyo's Charter Change (I-March) said they would bring their campaign to parishes and barangays against the administration-backed signature drive.

I-March is composed of lawyers, church leaders, town councilors, village officials and members of civil society groups. Among those who signed its petition were former Vice Gov. Ramon Duremdes, Bishop Gaspar Bañes of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Msgr. Meliton Oso, executive director of the Jaro Archdiocesan Social Action Center, and leaders of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Gabriela and the Promotion of Church People's Response.

Duremdes, who teaches political law at the College of Law of the Central Philippine University here, said a people's initiative was not applicable for introducing Charter change involving the form of government.

It can only be used to amend or change specific or particular provisions of the Constitution, he said.

"The main focus of the signature campaign is to change the form of government from presidential and bicameral to parliamentary and unicameral. These are not amendments but revisions because this involves fundamental changes requiring a revision or rewriting of the Constitution," Duremdes told the INQUIRER.

The people's initiative seeks to gather at least 12 percent of the total number of registered voters and at least 3 percent of every congressional district's registered voters to call for a referendum on shift in the country's political system from presidential to parliamentary.

Duremdes said the signature drive was "questionable and a futile exercise."

It is also illegal, he said, citing the March 1997 ruling of the Supreme Court that Republic Act No. 6735, or the Initiative and Referendum Act of 1989, lacked an enabling law to support a people's initiative to amend the Charter.

"The (signature drive), is not only anomalous but a disgrace for the whole country," Duremdes said.

He said the movement would come out with a primer to be discussed in barangays that would tackle factual and legal issues on Charter change.

"People are being made to sign the petition without them understanding the serious legal implications of what they are doing," said Duremdes.

In its petition, I-March said the people's initiative used "deceit" to gather signatures.

It is part of a "desperate attempt (of President Macapagal-Arroyo) to maintain herself in power," it said.

The group said the estimated P2 billion that would be spent on the signature campaign should be used instead for social service.

I-March and Bayan led a rally against Charter change of around 400 protesters on April 6 on the grounds of the provincial capitol.

In Cebu, the signature campaign for a people's initiative has taken shape with four towns submitting their petitions to their municipal election officers for verification of signatures.

Provincial election supervisor Edwin Cadungog said the Comelec offices in the fifth-district towns of Liloan and Carmen, and second-district towns of Boljoon and Dumanjug have received the signature-filled forms on Wednesday and Thursday.

But he said he ordered the municipal election officers not to act yet because the signatures did not have notarized cover letters.

Cadungog said the signatures must have cover letters containing the names of proponents and the signature of a notary public.

He said he wanted the cover letters to be notarized so that in case the signatures turn out to be fake, the proponents could be sued. *With a report from Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Pandan leaves take center stage in Pangasinan festival

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BOYS and girls try to outdo each other in street dancing during the 4th Pandan Festival's Hapag Pandan cook fest in Mapandan, Pangasinan.

RAY B. ZAMBRANO / PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

MAPANDAN, PANGASINAN—GOT A taste for exotic food like *calderetang bayawak sa gata* (monitor lizard cooked in coconut milk), spicy *paniki* (bat) and *ginataang kuhol* (snails cooked in coconut milk)?

These indigenous food—perhaps only for the brave of heart or palate—took center stage on Thursday during the town's Pandan Festival's "Hapag Pandan," a cooking contest with a twist.

Ten groups competed for the best beverage, native cake, meat recipe and exotic recipe that use pandan (screw pine) leaves to perk up the dishes' taste and aroma.

"We want to be known in the tourism world as a town where pandan grows in abundance. We are promoting the many uses of this plant, such as in cooking, through the Pandan Festival," said Mayor Jose Ferdinand Calimlim.

These exotic dishes used to be ordinary fares in Mapandan (pop: 30,375), but modern living has relegated them to a corner that young Mapandan residents no longer eat them, Calimlim said.

The Hapag Pandan would have featured more recipes, such as those using field mice, beetles and snakes, but these ingredients were "out of season," Calimlim said.

The cook fest, however, featured recipes on shellfish (*beldat* and *tulya* or oysters) found in local rivers and poultry (wild duck, *ibong bato-bato* and quail).

The Women's Union of Primicias was declared overall champion when it won top prizes in the best recipe demonstration, exotic recipe and beverage categories.

The Mapandan Farmers' Association bagged the top prizes in the best booth and meat recipe categories.

The Mango Growers' Association and Market Vendors' Association won the best recipe presentation and best native cake categories, respectively.

"This is a proud moment for Mapandan. We are showing our pride for our culture and our town's beauty. We are reviving the culture and history not only of our town but of the entire Pangasinan," Calimlim said.

Gov. Victor Agbayani said he was happy that this central Pangasinan town was making its mark in tourism.

Agbayani said tourism was one of the programs that his administration was pursuing because the province has a rich culture and has beautiful places that Pangasinenses can be proud of.

It was through the aromatic plant pandan (Pandanus amaryllifolius Roxb.) that this town hoped to "find its own identity" and "land on the map of tourism," Calimlim said.

He said when Mapandan held the first festival in 2003, "it was basically a thanksgiving for the constant good harvest" that the agricultural town enjoys every year. The town grows rice, corn and vegetables.

Old-timers recalled that the pandan plant was plentiful in the town that used to be a part of nearby Mangaldan town.

The town's founders actually named Mapandan (a contraction of "*amayamay so pandan*" or "where pandan grows in abundance") after the plant.

But through the town's 104-year-old history, the number of the fragrant plant dwindled to a point where locals found it hard to find it.

A 25-foot pandan tree, however, stands proud in front of the town plaza.

"We are trying to recapture that era when our town was famous for the pandan plant," Calimlim said, noting that residents were now propagating the species.

The pandan leaves' aroma is distinct but hard to describe, he said. It is somewhat nutty, like the smell of fresh hay and definitely pleasant. It is usually used to make rice fragrant and to make other recipes flavorful.

But the plant's leaves, which have strong fibers, have plenty of other uses. They can be woven into mats, baskets, footwear and rope.

More pilgrims expected to join 'Pakil Turumba' Festival

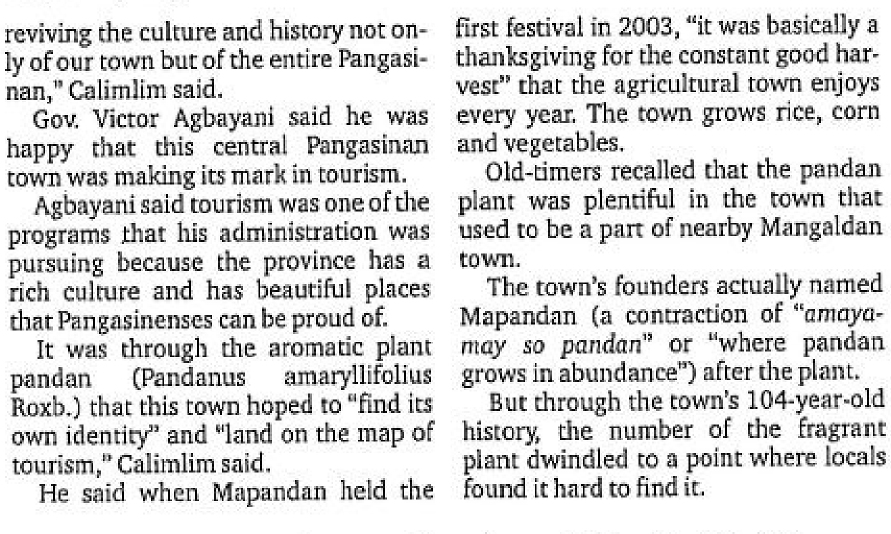


IMAGE of the Turumba Birhen Maria de los Dolores

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PAKIL, LAGUNA—PILGRIMS WERE expected to come to this town as early as April 7, Biyernes de Dolores, the start of the 11-day "Turumba Festival," according to parish priest Msgr. Jose D. Barrion.

The devotees, who usually come with their families and loved ones, hear Masses, dance in the "Turumba" processions and get drenched in a pool that heals while they wish for answers to petitions and various blessings.

The main event, which is most attended, falls on April 24-26 ("Pistang Biyatiko"), climaxes on June 4 ("Pistang Pagpanaog"), and ends on Sept. 15 ("Pistang Domingo de Dolores"), Barrion said.

Turumba comes from Spanish word "*tarum*," which means in a state of delirium or wild excitement because of joy.

This was how the Spaniards described centuries-ago the Pakil folk's dancing, singing, leaping, clapping and tapping of one another in jubilation for the coming of the image of the Our Lady of Sorrows in the parish after it was found in the Laguna de Bay.

Each of the 11-day event features the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the processions towards "Panghulo," and the Miraculous Nuestra Señora de los Dolores Swimming Pool, where devotees get drenched for cure, healing and gaining other blessings.

A retired professor, author and lay minister, Iñigo G. Vito, 85, who has worked for this parish for about 50 years, earlier said that pilgrims flocked to Pakil for the Turumba for various reasons, such as healing, passing board exams and success in business ventures.

The number of pilgrims is estimated to reach 500,000 for the entire year.

Pakil folk show their hospitality and friendliness to pilgrims from all walks of life, Vito sdaid.

The festival is organized into seven Lupi(s) (to fold), which commemorates the seven sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Sorrows. The seven Lupis include: 1st Lupi—Biyernes de Dolores, April 7; Lupi 2—Pistang Martes, April 18; Lupi 3—Pistang Biyatiko, April 24-26; Lupi 4—Pistang Biyernes, May 5; Araw ng Pakil or Pista Pakiliña, May 12.

The others are Lupi 5—Pistang Linggo, May 14; Lupi 6—Pistang Pag-akyat, May 26, and Lupi 7—Pistang Pagpanaog, May 27.

The Santacruzan, called the "Ahunan sa Ping-as," will be held on June 4.

The Pistang Domingo de los Dolores on Sept. 12 is the memorial for the finding of the miraculous statue of the Birheng Hapis in 1788.

Accounts said that in 1588, Fray Pedro Bautista (now San Pedro Bautista), a Franciscan Martyr, formed the first community of Pakil, originally called Paquil after the first Malay Datu Gat Paquil who ruled the town in 1575.

Its church was just a small chapel, which belonged to the church of Paete.

On May 12, 1676, the town and the parish of Pakil were separated from Paete through the intercession of the Franciscan priest Francisco de Barajas and Captain Diego Jorge.

The people of Pakil, according to some sources, had a difficult time building the stone church. It took them 35 years to finish it.

According to other stories, some of the men who helped build the church would leave their pregnant wives and come back to see their children already walking.

The church was completed in 1767 and earned the reputation of being the sturdiest church around the Laguna de Bay.

It is 49 meters long and 11 meters wide. The façade is Corinthian, with an ionic niche above the side door. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Tourists flock to rodeo

LEGAZPI CITY—Domestic and foreign tourists flocked to the four-day "Rodeo Masbateño" at the Rodeo Arena in Masbate City. Hotels, lodging houses, inns and resorts outside the city have been fully booked during the four-day festival, which ends today, according to that city's tourism officer Neil Almero. Events include bull whipping, load carrying, tug-of-war, cattle lassoing on foot and on horseback, cattle wrestling on foot, casting down, *carambola* or scramble, cattle bareback riding, barrel race and livestock show.

Ephraim Aguilar, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Wire thief nabbed

STA. ROSA CITY—Police arrested on Tuesday a jobless man for stealing electric wire and tools owned by Manila Electric Co. Police identified the suspect as Andres V. Baron, 31, of Barangay Dita, this city. His companion, identified as Ronnie Veldad, eluded arrest. Police said that at about 10:30 p.m. on April 4, the suspects were caught stealing Meralco wire by its inspection team. Recovered from them were the wire, pliers and ladder.

Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Civilian safety officers

LEGAZPI CITY—This city has a population of about 200,000 but it only has 108 policemen, way below the average police-to-population ratio of 1:1,000 in Bicol. To augment its peacekeeping force, the city government has trained 100 public safety officers (PSOs) who help police in patrolling the streets and directing traffic. The bike-riding PSOs enforce ordinances and arrest petty crime offenders, like jaywalkers and those who smoke in public places. As of November last year, the PSOs had arrested 176 people for violating the antismoking ordinance. Supt. Robinson Ortega, former city police chief and now PSO head, said the city council had allocated P3 million for the salaries of the PSOs.

Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Butuan prosecutor slain

BUTUAN CITY—An unidentified person shot and killed city prosecutor Godofredo Paceño Jr. at around 4:45 p.m. here on Friday. Paceño was on his way home to Nasipit, Agusan del Norte on board a jeepney when he was shot in Barangay Dumalagan, Buenavista town. He was hit twice in the left cheek and died on the way to the hospital. City police chief Senior Supt. Ramon Espiritu said the cases handled by Paceño would be looked into to determine if his death was work-related.

Ma. Kristina E. Cassion, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Fire hits Ipil town

PAGADIAN CITY—A fire razed a section of the commercial district of Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay on Saturday. Fire trucks from Roseller T. Lim, Buug and Salug towns in Zamboanga del Norte helped local firemen in battling the blaze, which started at around 5:45 a.m. The fire, which also spread to the adjacent Pasalubong Market, was put under control at around 7 a.m. Col. Nestor Ochoa, commander of the Army's 102nd Infantry Brigade, said the fire started in one of the market stalls. *Michael Sarcauga, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

1 dead in ambush

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A passenger was killed and four others were wounded when unidentified armed men ambushed a jeepney between Jolo and Indanan towns in Sulu on Thursday. Sulu police director Senior Supt. Ahirum Ajirim said the jeepney, with about 20 passengers, was on its way to Jolo from Kalinggalang Caluang when it was attacked near Km 12. The lone fatality was identified as Nurhayma Hadjirul. The wounded victims were taken to the Sulu Provincial Hospital. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Bulacan mayor dies

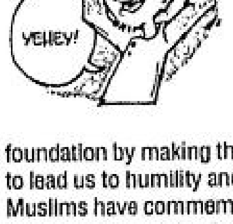
CITY OF MALOLOS—Mayor Ricardo Meneses of Bulacan, Bulacan died from a heart attack during a religious retreat in Tagaytay City on Thursday night. He was 53. Dorie Araneta, a municipal employee, said Meneses was speaking to local officials and employees at about 10 p.m. when he complained of dizziness. Araneta said the mayor collapsed as he was looking for a seat to rest. Employees took Meneses to the Ospital ng Tagaytay but doctors failed to revive him. Meneses was elected mayor in 2004. *Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

2 killed in resto shooting

BALANGA CITY—Unidentified men opened fire at customers inside a restaurant here on Thursday, killing two persons and seriously wounded the security aide of Bataan Gov. Enrique Garcia. Chief Insp. Luisito Magnaye, provincial police intelligence chief, identified the fatalities as PO3 Jose Miranda, 42, a former bodyguard of Garcia, and Pedro Santos, of Barangay Bliss here. PO2 Orlino Valenzuela was wounded in the abdomen and thigh and brought to the Bataan General Hospital. Police said Miranda and Valenzuela were having a midnight snack in the restaurant when four men opened fire.

Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Holiday in ARMM today



COTABATO CITY—Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan has declared April 10 a non-working holiday in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, in commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. "Let us celebrate this significant occasion trying to strengthen our moral foundation by making the Prophet's life an example to lead us to humility and peace," Ampatuan said. Muslims have commemorated the Prophet's birthday as the day of rituals for the circumcision of young boys.

Nash B. Maulana, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Radio station ordered closed

AGAINST CHARTER CHANGE JB R. DEVEZA/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU
Militant groups barricade the office of Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraulo, chair of the committee on constitutional amendments of the Lower House.

VALENCIA CITY—MAYOR JOSE Galario has ordered the closure of a radio station for maligning his leadership.

Galario said he was only invoking his power not to grant a business permit to the radio station.

Radio Mindanao Network's dxVR FM radio station received a notice of closure on April 5, but Joash Dignos, anchor of "Kuskos Batikos," did not stop airing his program. "Kuskos Batikos" is a commentary radio program of RMN stations in the country.

Dignos told the INQUIRER that Galario stormed the station, allegedly brandishing his firearm.

"I got scared, but then I still continued with my program and reported Galario's actions to the listeners instead," Dignos said.

The broadcast attracted his supporters and curious onlookers to the radio station.

Anna Lyn Somoza, an RMN staff member, told the INQUIRER that an irked Galario threatened to kill Dignos if the commentator went out of the station.

Somoza also said her colleague's tape recorder was confiscated.

Galario said that in ordering the closure of the station, he was just invoking his executive power after the court denied a motion for reconsideration for mandamus and damages filed by the radio facility against him.

"The broadcasts continued to malign the duly constituted authority and destroys the morale and welfare of the people. He (Dignos) has been using press freedom as his decoy for his political agenda," Galario said.

Galario also sought the First Bukidnon Electric Cooperative's help to cut power supply to the radio station. But Fibeco declined as the station did not have delinquent payments.

Provincial police chief Senior Supt. Francisco Gamboa helped ease the tension after speaking to the mayor and Dignos and urging them to remain calm and resolve the conflict peacefully.

"I have proposed that the two parties meet halfway to settle their differences," Gamboa said.

RMN legal counsel Butch Bagabuyo told the INQUIRER that the company was considering filing legal action against Galario.

Only the National Telecommunications Commission can close down radio and television networks while Congress can do so if it revoked the franchise of radio or television networks, Bagabuyo said.

In 2004, Galario also closed down the University of Mindanao Broadcast Network's Radyo Ukay for the same reason. *Grace Cantal-Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Ice plant in Laguna shut down

STA. CRUZ, LAGUNA—THE LONE ICE plant that had served this town for 42 years was closed following an ammonia leak that affected 66 residents, mostly children in nearby communities.

The plant had a daily production of 15-30 tons of ice.

Mayor Dennis Panganiban ordered the plant closed while the local government awaited the results of an investigation into the incident.

The plant owner, Rodelio Catindig, said he was apologizing to the victims and would repair the facility immediately.

Sta. Cruz police chief Supt. Steve Ludan said 17 of the victims were infants while 49 others were aged 13 and above. They lived in Barangay Bubukal where the plant is located.

Records at the Pagsanjan Medical Clinic, where 20 of the victims were brought for treatment, said the cause of the poisoning was inhalation of ammonia.

The victims were sent home after treatment that same night.

Ludan said that on April 2, at about 5:30 p.m., one of the plant's pipelines emitted ammonia, which is used to process ice.

The stench of the chemical was strong enough to irritate passengers of jeeps that passed by the area.

All of the victims experienced dizziness, skin itchiness and vomiting. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Military sowing 'peace of grave' in villages—Bayan

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—"PEACE OF THE grave," or one that is inspired by fear, is what the Armed Forces of the Philippines is doing in Mexico, Pampanga, a town that an Army official last week declared rebel-free, a leader of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) said.

"This peace is a farce ... and grows out of the barrel of the gun, not based on people's trust," said Roman Polintan, Bayan-Central Luzon chair.

Polintan issued the statement in reaction to the claim of Lt. Col. Ricardo Visaya, commander of the Army's 69th Infantry Battalion, that Mexico was now clear of communist rebels.

Polintan said the 69th IB had established detachments in 12 villages.

Soldiers, he claimed, "harassed, intimidated and coerced the residents into admitting they were alleged supporters of the New People's Army (NPA), even forcing them to attend military-sponsored seminars and projecting them in the media as alleged surrenderees."

Those who attended the "anticommunist" seminar-workshop in Mexico last week came out of fear, Polintan said.

Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr., commander of the 7th Infantry Division, gave lectures during the seminar.

Visaya, in a phone interview, denied that the military used force to convince residents in 19 of 43 Mexico villages to withdraw support for the NPA, the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB) and the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB).

"What we held were dialogues. We also conducted civic missions. We told them we were their partners in peace here," Visaya said.

Polintan called the rebel-free tag of Mexico as "baseless and self-serving" because no rebels were arrested or killed in the town.

"What is true is that it is the ordinary civilians who had been suffering the brunt of military atrocities," he alleged.

Cebu detachment

In Cebu, a group of farmers have protested the establishment of a military detachment in the farming village of Bonbon in the northern Cebu town of Aloguinsan.

Alfreda Alcos, chair of the farmer's group Pag-amoma which is affiliated with the militant Kilusan ng Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), claimed that farmers in Bonbon and neighboring villages were afraid to go to their farms, especially when they were alone, because of the presence of the soldiers.

Alcos charged that the arrival of some 180 soldiers of the 78th Infantry Battalion in his village was aimed at harassing around 3,000 land reform farmer-beneficiaries who had obtained certificates of land ownership awards (CLOAs) from the Department of Land Reform.

He said the farmer-beneficiaries were found in four farming estates owned by the Gantuangco, Escario, Osmeña and Paras families in Barangays Rosario, Kandingan, Saragoza, Esperanza and Poblacion.

Lt, Col. Jessie Alvarez, 78th IB commander, denied that the unit was setting up a detachment in Bonbon. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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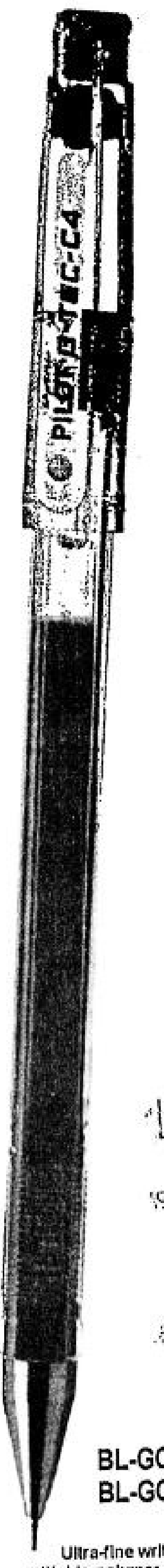

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MILF wants role in UN food aid

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) said it wanted to have a role in the United Nations' $27-million food aid program for areas of conflict in Mindanao.

While praising the UN for its "show of concern to heal the wounds of war" in Mindanao, MILF chief negotiator Mohaqher Iqbal said the MILF wanted to take part in the program's implementation "to give relevance to the ongoing ...peace process."

"We welcome this development and the UN food aid will surely help a lot of poor people in conflict-torn areas in Mindanao. It will provide the much-needed humanitarian assistance to many poor Muslim communities and the MILF is willing to take part and help the UN and the government realize this noble cause," Iqbal said.

The MILF's participation in the program would be through the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), Iqbal said. The BDA, put up by the MILF and the government, implements rehabilitation and development programs in Mindanao.

"This is also to prevent interruption on the ground," he said without elaborating.

Anthony Banbury, UN World Food Program director for Asia, told newsmen that the WFP looked forward to assisting the Philippine government in bringing about food security, improved health and nutrition and other tangible benefits of peace to Mindanao communities affected by decades of conflict.

Central Mindanao

The food program, he said, would zero in on communities in Central Mindanao where the armed conflict has been concentrated in recent years.

At the height of the all-out war in 2000 declared by then President Joseph Estrada, about a million people were driven away from their homes and farmlands.

More were displaced in subsequent skirmishes between government troops and Moro rebels in 2001 and 2003.

Malaysian Deputy Defense Minister Dato Hadji Zainal Abidin Bin Hadji Zin met with MILF chair Murad Ebrahim in Maguindanao on Friday.

"He said that Malaysia, under the principle of co-prosperity, wishes that the peace process will succeed without any material reward," said Iqbal. He was quoting the Malaysian official's message during a courtesy call on the MILF camp in Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat town.

Peace talks between the government and the Moro rebel group are being brokered by Kuala Lumpur.

Khaled Musa, chair of the MILF committee on information, said a breakthrough in the talks was expected as more negotiations would be held.

Optimistic

Both the government and the MILF expressed optimism that a final peace agreement could be signed this year.

The United States reiterated its commitment to support the government's peace dealings with the MILF. Nut it said any intervention would have to be within the country's constitutional framework.

Eugene Martin, representative of the US Institute for Peace (USIP), said that while the United States recognized the peoples' rights to self-determination under the UN Human Rights Declarations, it also wanted constitutions of host countries upheld.

On Thursday, the USIP responded to an MILF question on whether or not the US would support any move to "decolonize" the Moros and eventually secede from the Philippine Republic.

The MILF question and Martin's response ostensibly broke months of silence by negotiators from mentions of the terms "Constitution" and "Islamic state."

Martin also reiterated that the MILF had to "severe ties" with terror networks in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world.

The rebel group has repeatedly denied any association with terror groups.

The MILF, which broke out of the Moro National Liberation Front in the 1980s, has been fighting for the establishment of an independent Moro state in the South. *Edwin O. Fernandez, Nash B. Maulana and Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Governor belongs to Batch 2006

PIÑOL

KABACAN, NORTH COTABATO—Guess who else belongs to Batch 2006?

College life for Gov. Emmanuel Piñol spans through several generations of today's electronic age and of his youth's nostalgia, playing on announcer's booth the "golden records" of "The Graduates" movie soundtrack.

Piñol, a former radio announcer and newspaper editor, delivered Tuesday his fellow graduates' response to Sen. Manny Villar, the guest speaker in the 60th Commencement Exercise of the University of Southern Mindanao here.

Among 421 graduates, Piñol, 52, received his degree in Development Communication, Major in Community Broadcasting, for which his works in the print and broadcast media were credited under Executive Order No. 330, the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) law issued by then President Fidel V. Ramos.

Villar, chair of the Senate committee on finance, vowed to push for stronger resource commitment on education in Congress.

"We all agree that dreams can only be achieved through education and hard work. This is why many of your parents had to work hard in the field under the scorching sun and the chilly rain to pay for your tuition, buy your books and buy you presentable clothes. For many of you, the order of things is: diploma first then hard work next. For me, it is a different story. Hard work first, and now finally, a diploma," Piñol said.

Valedictorian

Piñol, who graduated valedictorian in both elementary and high school in Nueva Vida in M'lang town, said his family's growing brood of 11 boys curtailed his way through college education. His parents' pay as public school teachers "were just not enough to buy us the basic things that we needed in school."

He said it was while walking hungry to his boarding house from the Ateneo de Davao when he saw an employment ad for a broadcast news writer trainee posted on the wall of the University of Mindanao Broadcasting Network (UMBN).

Getting hired by UMBN as news writer and later as broadcaster in the 1970s started his media stint when, he said, he thought he no longer needed a college degree.

But things proved relatively different, he had realized. "While others only had to show their diploma in applying for a job, I had to show my skills. To improve my mastery of the English language, I had to record the broadcast of the country's top newscasters and listen to them at night to improve my pronunciation and diction," he said.

"I had to read a lot of books and English magazines to fully understand the idioms of the language," he added.

Hard work

He continued: "Hard work was what brought me to the top."

Dr. Virgilio Oliva, USM president, said the school was honored both by having Villar as the graduation guest speaker and Piñol, the first incumbent elected official as one of its graduates.

Even when he is a governor, Piñol had anchored on TV some of the celebrated ring bouts of boxing idol Manny "Pacman" Paquiao. His local government sports program includes training of young boxers and granting modest incentives to emerging sports persons of his province.

Piñol was first elected mayor of M'lang in 1995. Residents said his tough stance on criminality and sheer devotion to development had gained for him his people's confidence in the last three gubernatorial elections after a term as mayor. *Nash B. Maulana, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

At 73, this grandma may yet run a marathon

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
Iloilo City

JAMANDRE ARNOLD ALMACEN

WHILE OTHER WOMEN HER age would want to slow down, this 73-year-old grandmother walks and walks and may even run a marathon.

Vita Jamandre is one of the oldest persons who signed up in Friday's Adventist Marathon Clinic in Iloilo City, which hoped to get people to run for the sake of their health. She is out to prove that women like her need not be weedy because they have a lot of go in them.

She missed the 30-minute demo run marathon clinic yesterday but she will join the run after her return from Palawan on Tuesday, according to her son Tirso.

The Adventist Marathon Clinic is famous in Southern California in the United States because it is not only well attended but is also gritty on its goal to save many from cardiopulmonary illnesses, depression and insulin dependency, among other conditions.

It is a 12-week running program that promises to carve marathoners out of couch potatoes.

The effort started in Iloilo in 1982, when Jamandre and a family friend, Fred Hosillos, founded the Summit Club Marathon Clinic that supervised a 12-week walking and running program.

The following year, while visiting Glendale, California, Hosillos shared the success of their club to leaders of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the southern part of the state. Thus, the Adventist Marathon Clinic was born and Hosillos, to this day, teaches people to walk, jog, bike, dance and hike.

Jamandre said she took to running to cope with the death of her husband. Gradually, she noticed her disposition and health improved, and her body trimmer. She was sleeping soundly, too.

When she was pushing 50, Jamandre started running, learning the basics like a toddler. Instead of sprinting, she shuffled heel-and-toe, a technique that prevents damage to calves and toes.

She took off, and how her progress amazed her. With bridges along Diversion Road (now Benigno Aquino Jr. Avenue) as her milestones, she was running 5 km three times a week. With built-up confidence, she ran 10 km.

Running should not be an exercise that zaps the energy but invigorates the runner, said Jamandre. Running has to pass the so-called talk test (runners can still chat) because it should be fun. If they can't, they're going fast, she said.

In 1984, Jamandre finished a 21-km half-marathon, a feat she considered her greatest achievement as a runner. She did not win, but she reached her goal of finishing the race.

"It's not about speed but endurance," she said.

Life in US

From 1985 to 1992, Jamandre moved to Florida, but she ran less frequently. She walked a lot though, often with a plastic bag to put the trash she collected along the way. "It was my good deed for the day."

In 2000, she stopped her regimen and was later sorry for it. She "felt bad," she said. She suffered back pains and easily got tired. While she tried to keep healthy by avoiding pork and sugar, and eating lots of fruits and vegetables, it was not quite the same.

In February 2005, she resumed walking, her best step to keep fit. Her goal is to run anew, hopefully with the visit of Hosillos with whom she had started the Summit running clinic 22 years ago.

Jamandre is admired by her friends for her zest in everything she does. She teaches music at the Central Philippine University and is currently officer in charge of the music department attached to the School of Theology.

She also teaches music at the West Visayas Academy and the Central Philippine Adventist College. Her house in La Paz District doubles as a music studio where she gives piano lessons.

She earned a music degree at the Walla Walla College in Washington state and her Masters in Piano Performance at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

She continues to reap the rewards of a healthy lifestyle, which is also shared by her four children and five grandchildren.

Most of the time, she drives and travels alone. She has survived breast cancer, sells herbal food supplements, and promotes organic food.

(The Adventist Marathon Clinic in Iloilo City will run from April 8-9 to April 15-16. For details, call Boyz Jamandre at 09189403400)

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CEBU PACIFIC go FARES

Man gets life term for selling 15 mg shabu

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—FOR SELLING BARELY A gram of shabu, a man was sentenced to serve life in prison.

Rodolfo Noblezada Gamoyao, who is in his 40s, has been in the police "order of battle" for allegedly being a notorious drug peddler, but his undoing came when he sold 15 milligrams of shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) to a police officer posing as a drug buyer in 2003.

Guilty

Regional Trial Court Judge Edgar Garvilles found Gamoyao guilty of violating Republic Act No. 9165, which prohibits the sale and delivery of dangerous drugs, and meted on him the penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of P500,000.

Gamoyao was also found guilty of possession of 9 milligrams of shabu and was separately meted the prison term of 12 to 14 years, and to pay the fine of P300,000.

"Ostensibly, the penalties prescribed by RA 9165 are harsh. But it is the law, it has to be applied," Garvilles said.

Buy-bust operation

Senior Insp. Clarence Dongail, then Bacolod Police Precinct 2 commander, testified that on June 27, 2003, he conducted a buy-bust operation along the foot walk of Purok Kagaykay, Barangay 2.

He said that when he reached the area, he was met by Gamoyao who asked him if he was going to buy shabu. He said yes.

Dongail said he gave a marked P1,000 bill in exchange for 15 milligrams of shabu.

As soon as the illegal drug was handed over to him, Dongail said he identified himself as a police officer and searched Gamoyao for a weapon or contraband.

He said he recovered more shabu and an improvised tooter from Gamoyao.

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GMA allies to devote Holy Week to Cha-cha

From page A1

ability endeavor to keep this political exercise fair and clean," Nograles said.

He said that administration congressmen would spend their month-long Lenten recess campaigning for Cha-cha "to straighten out the misconception and misimpression" about the proposed shift.

"It is our duty as the people's representatives to keep our constituents adequately and properly informed about issues at hand," Nograles said in a phone interview.

"We have been advocating for the great debate on Cha-cha, and we cannot just allow those against it to discredit Cha-cha with their black propaganda to mislead the people. The strong clamor for Cha-cha should not be blocked by disinformation," he said.

9 million signatures

In a statement, Rep. Douglas Cagas of Davao del Sur said the outpouring of support for Charter change was genuine as shown by the 9 million signatures so far gathered by the administration-backed Sigaw ng Bayan Movement.

"There is no doubt that Cha-cha is being strongly endorsed by the people, the only issue is the mode of constitutional amendment," said Cagas, vice chair of the committee on constitutional amendments.

Charter change has always been a major plank of Ms Arroyo's platform of government, Cagas said.

Under the people's initiative, administration supporters are attempting to gather signatures of 12 percent of the registered voters and at least 3 percent of them from each legislative district.

The question submitted for signature is, "Do you approve the amendment (to) Articles VI and VII of the 1987 Constitution, changing the form of government from the present bicameral-presidential to a unicameral-parliamentary system and providing Article XVII as transitory provisions for the orderly shift from one system to the other?"

Cha-cha timetable

Under the timetable announced by Rep. Constantino Jaraula, the people's initiative petition will be filed with the Commission on Elections by April 14 and Comelec will begin verifying the signatures after that. By July 15, the amendments are to be submitted to a plebiscite. An interim parliament is seen to be convened by the end of July.

Jaraula is chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments.

Ms Arroyo announced in July last year that she was pushing her election campaign vow to adopt the parliamentary system amid increasing calls for her resignation over allegations, which she has denied, that she stole the 2004 presidential election.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday said it was time for the Supreme Court to revisit its 1997 decision on the inadequacy of the people's initiative.

"Maybe it's about time to have the case reopened," he said in a phone interview.

The Supreme Court voted 6-6 when it denied the motions for reconsideration of the People's Initiative for Reforms, Modernization and Action appealing its decision finding the law inadequate for a people's initiative.

SC can revise decision

Gonzalez also said former Associate Justice Vicente Mendoza and new Associate Justice Presbitero Velasco had both said the Supreme Court could reverse its decisions.

Velasco had said the high tribunal could "abandon existing doctrines and create new ones," while Mendoza had said no decision was permanent.

Gonzalez also criticized Bernas, one of the framers of the 1987 Constitution, for saying that Ms Arroyo was insulting the Supreme Court by backing the signature drive for Charter change through a people's initiative despite the high tribunal's earlier ruling.

Bernas said on Saturday that the President was fully aware that a new enabling law was needed for a people's initiative.

"Father Bernas wants to make an intrigue," Gonzalez said. "If he wants to think he's the Supreme Court, let him think that way."

Gonzalez also said that since the government believed there was nothing illegal in conducting the signature drive, it would not take the issue to the Supreme Court. "Someone who says we are doing something illegal should be the one to question it."

SC may become irrelevant

Supreme Court spokesperson Ismael Khan refused to comment on Bernas's statement. "It's bound to be misinterpreted in the worst possible way," he said in a phone interview.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said the Supreme Court, to remain relevant, must now put to rest questions hanging over the people's initiative and other Palace orders questioned before the tribunal.

"The Supreme Court, if it is not to be mortally wounded by Malacañang's relentless war of attrition against the Constitution, must resolve all these constitutional questions without further delay," Pangilinan said.

Commenting on Bernas's statement, Pangilinan said Malacañang had been emboldened to "disrespect" the Supreme Court because it had always gotten away with illegal acts.

Pangilinan, Senate representative to the Judicial Bar Council, referred to moves to clamp down on protests, restrictions on officials appearing before congressional hearings and the declaration of the weeklong state of emergency in February.

"They will do everything just to stay in power," said Pangilinan.

"You can hardly blame her for that (ignoring the Supreme Court). First of all, she's not a lawyer and second, she does not care about the constitutional process," Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said in an interview.

Focused on saving herself

"She's focused only on the matter of saving herself from the responsibility of the misdeeds of her administration," Pimentel added.

In remarks at Mount Samat in Bataan commemorating the 64th Araw ng Kagitingan, Ms Arroyo reiterated her program to institute political reforms without specifically mentioning moves to amend the Constitution.

"The struggle is still long and heavy but we are determined to win because we have the needed weapons," she said.

Gov. Enrique Garcia of Bataan told reporters that the signature campaign in his province had reached 100,000 or 25 percent of almost 400,000 population of Bataan. *With reports from TJ Burgonio and Christine O. Avendaño*

54-year-old 'senakulo' . . .

From page A1

tage. Should we let ourselves be shaken by something that came up only now?" Tero said, referring to the controversial thriller that is premised on so-called Church "secrets" about the Messiah's relationship with Magdalene.

Estelita Santos, 75, a retired City Hall employee who has been directing the play since the '70s, said the film was "the work of a bad spirit."

Considered the chief guardian of tradition of the group, Santos is the niece of the libretto's late author, Amando Yson, one of the seven Buting residents who established Osana in 1952.

For someone who had once played Magdalene herself, Santos said she had never entertained the thought that this character may have had romantic ties to Christ.

Tero said Osana's version did not even perpetuate the commonly held image of Magdalene as a "prostitute" but only as a woman who had "flirted" with many men before becoming a follower of Christ.

Flirting on stage

The only actual "flirting" done onstage is by the character Salome, who danced seductively for King Herod and asked for the head of John The Baptist as her reward, Tero said.

She conceded that Yson's script included some characters and scenes not found in the Bible to serve as "*palabok*" (spice) and to "probably make it more enticing to the audience."

The INQUIRER met Osana's key actors Friday night as they rehearsed for yet another out-of-town engagement.

Registered with the SEC

Registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the group is considered one of the finest *senakulistas* in the Manila-Rizal area, made up of ordinary residents who transform themselves into sword-and-sandal characters to keep a colorful folk tradition alive.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MEMBERS of the Original Samahang Nazareno perform during the "senakulo" (Passion play) in Pasig City.

Past performances include one at the Rizal Park sponsored by San Miguel Corp., at the Ultra (now PhilSports Arena), and at the Manuel L. Quezon University. This year, the show is in Barangay Ususan, Taguig City.

The sponsors are usually civic organizations, neighborhood associations, barangay officials or private companies, according to Tero.

Weeklong production

Over the past decade, a weeklong production—usually from the night of Palm Sunday to the night of Black Saturday—would require Osana an average budget of around P100,000. (The show this year will start tonight.)

But the money mainly pays for transport, power supply, sound system, fireworks, construction of the stage and props, new wardrobe, makeup services, etc.—not as "talent fees" for the actors who are considered to be pursuing a *panata* (religious vow).

The Osana troupe can involve as many as 60 people, 40 of whom go on stage with multiple roles—except for the leads who play Jesus and Virgin Mary. They usually get their commission as early as January and thus have three months to prepare.

The cast would include "15 Roman soldiers, 10 little angels and one devil," said the bearded Virgilio Manzana, 61, an electrical engineering contractor and former barangay councilor who has been playing Judas since 1978.

No need to update script

Tero said that despite new stage technologies that enabled the troupe to improve its sound and visual effects, the group has felt no need to "update" its 54-year-old script: A hardbound book with the Virgin Mary's image on its cover, with 204 typewritten pages now yellow with age.

"Jesus" himself is confident that the *senakulo* will never lose its appeal to the young—despite their exposure to the Da Vinci Code novel or movie.

"I'm not that worried," said Erick Martinez, 37, a car parts salesman who has been "crucified" each Good Friday since 1994. "Filipinos will always turn to the Bible, on which our performance is mainly based."

"Every time I go out there, I always see that the most attentive in the audience are still the young people because many of them are seeing something like this for the first time," he said.

Martinezes play Jesus

The role of Christ has been passed on within the Martinez household: His father Antonio was the original, while Erick's 5-year-old son Angelo Gabriel is also getting into the act as this year's "Sto. Niño (the boy Jesus)."

And even a bit player like Manny Jaojoco, a 38-year-old folk singer who will "serenade" Mary Magdalene in one scene, doesn't make much of the supposed dangers posed by notions Dan Brown has unleashed.

"OK, you will read the book or watch the movie, and then be influenced into turning your back on your religion? Where else could you possibly go?" he asked.

₱1B in benefits for war veterans released

From page A1

al terms," Ms Arroyo said.

Survivors had time and again bewailed the government's lack of concern for them, claiming that their P5,000 monthly pension was not enough to sustain them in their old age.

So far, this was the first time in the past five years that they were going home after attending the Araw ng Kagitingan rites with a clear promise of help.

"I'd like our beloved veterans to know that your President is doing everything within my means to respond to your needs," Ms Arroyo told the veterans in Filipino.

This year, the PVAO has a budget of P13.016 billion for the benefits of more 250,000 pensioners, according to Dayan. He said the P130 million in arrears last year for the educational benefits of the veterans' dependents would be paid.

"We're managing to get additional funds because of the improved tax collections," Dayan told the INQUIRER before the wreath-laying rites at the Dambana ng Kagitingan.

The last time the government set aside money for veterans was in June 2005 when the President ordered the release of P300 million to partially pay for arrears to more than 100,000 military retirees and veterans.

Common war

Commemorating the "heroism" and "valor" of Filipino and American soldiers who fought in World War II, especially in Bataan and Corregidor, the President noted that the soldiers sacrificed their lives, youth and dreams "so that the next generation can enjoy freedom and democracy."

"Our forebears stood shoulder to shoulder and fought to the death when freedom came under severe attack," she said.

She forgave the Japanese soldiers who committed atrocities during the war.

"Today, in the globalized regime and after 50 years of deep friendship with the people of Japan, we no longer differentiate the causes of the Filipino, American and Japanese soldiers during that war. Whatever side they were on, whatever country they came from, they passed the test of their time with full honors," Ms Arroyo said.

She agreed with the views of US Ambassador Kristie Kenney and Japanese Ambassador Ryuichiro Yamazaki, saying the common war now of the three countries was against "hunger, crime, corruption, terrorism, communism and religious and ethnic misunderstanding and warfare."

Kenney's father in Bataan

Kenney, just almost three weeks into her post, was on the verge of tears toward the end of her speech.

"I stand here today in this most, most dignified of monuments in an extremely beautiful land. It is for me very emotional and very special to say, '*Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!* Long live the Philippines!'" she said, her voice cracking. *(See related story on Page A13.)*

Her father Jerry, father-in-law retired Gen. Albert Brownfield and cousin Sonny Brownfield all served and survived the war.

It was Kenney's first visit to the shrine.

Apology

For the second time since 2005, Yamazaki expressed his "heartfelt apologies and deep sense of remorse" over the atrocities committed by the Japanese military in the Philippines during World War II, including the Death March.

Yamazaki vowed that his government would "not allow the lessons of that terrible war to erode" and that it had the "determination to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world without ever waging a war."

He said he expected that this year, the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic ties between the Philippines and Japan, the conclusion of an agreement to make "our bilateral economic relations more comprehensive, more interactive and more mutually beneficial."

Japan, he said, was also looking forward to the conclusion of a final peace agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front within the year.

"Japan believes that a peaceful and stable Mindanao will improve the security and economic situation in both the Philippines and Southeast Asia and, therefore, we will continue to render assistance for the rehabilitation and development of Mindanao, closely collaborating with all the stakeholders," he said.

Yamazaki pledged his country's closer cooperation with the Philippines, the United States and Australia in fighting terrorism.

Lament

Mariano Eslao, 86, a survivor of the Death March, lauded Ms Arroyo for helping the veterans but criticized the United States for discriminating against Filipino veterans.

In Baguio City, news about Ms Arroyo's pledge has yet to reach Felicidad Quisaba-Lozano, a security guard whose late father fought the Japanese in Occidental Mindoro.

But Lozano, who volunteered to monitor Ms Arroyo's votes in Baguio in 2004, said her strong faith in the President assured her that her father would finally get justice.

Lozano said her father, Pio Quisaba, died in 2002 without receiving his pension.

Quisaba was relying on a written promise the government made in a 2004 letter, which he had under his pillow on the day he died.

The letter said budget constraints aside, Quisaba's P200,000 pension would finally reach him in 2003. But no pension reached Quisaba's heirs. *With a report from Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Fasting for Catholics, feasting for Muslims

From page A1

Maharika Village in Taguig, Basman and some 50,000 residents are all set for the big week.

The community is predominantly poor, especially with the presence of Muslims displaced by the conflict in Mindanao. But take it from Basman, a Maharlika resident for 30 years, there's no stopping the community from holding an extravagant and sustained celebration.

The flair is in the food.

Since last week, Basman said Maharlika residents had been busy preparing a weeklong menu of mostly spicy meals.

Distinct in Southeast Asia

A favorite is an Indonesian-inspired dish called "*randang*," a spicy version of the Tagalog beefsteak. There is also the "*papar*" or chicken glaced with coconut bits. Rice is beryani, the type said to be usually served in Mediterranean restaurants.

A hearty meal won't be complete without the "*dudol*," the Muslims' version of the sticky *kalamay* rice cake, and the "*browa*," a sweet, cupcake-like delicacy that takes a whole night to bake.

Such an elaborate celebration, at least for those who can afford it, is distinct among Muslims in Southeast Asia, said Basman, also the leader of the 500,000-member Philippine Islamic Council.

"Some of our more conservative brothers sometimes remind us to be more solemn," he said. "But this has always been the way Muslims commemorate the birth of the Prophet in this part of the world. We make it a feast."

Culture of merrymaking

That's because the occasion has been influenced by the different cultures and faiths in the region, where Islam has been in existence for hundreds of years, he explained.

In the Philippines, Basman said, Islam is "more open," having been influenced by the Filipino culture of merrymaking.

Among sultans, the celebration is called the "*morod*," during which they serve a sumptuous lunch to the community. If guests continue to pour in, the feast goes on until everybody is full, Basman said.

Could a Catholic then, supposedly in deep prayer during the Holy Week, enjoy the company of a Muslim in a "party mood?"

Mingling of chants

It's no problem in Maharlika, whose population also includes some Catholics, according to Basman.

This year, there will be a chorus of Catholic and Islamic chants at Maharlika since Muslims, too, will be deep in prayer during the week, he said.

"*Maulidan nabi* is not just about feasting; it's more importantly about praying."

Basman's day begins at Maharlika's Blue Mosque at 4:30 a.m. for the early morning prayer called the "*soboh*." He stays there to read the Koran until 7.

The next four hours are spent at home, with Basman still deep into the Koran. Then it's back to the mosque in time for the community prayer "dhor."

Daylong prayers

After a festive lunch from 1 to 3 p.m., he'll return to the mosque for the "*asr*," and then read the Koran for another one-and-a-half hours. The "*maghrib*" prayer is at around 5:30 p.m., followed by the "*isha*" two hours later.

By 9 p.m., Basman will have dinner at home and then return to the mosque at 1 a.m. for a special prayer called the "*tahajud*" until 3 a.m.

In other words, Muslims like Basman will have slept only around seven hours in the seven days of the *maulidan nabi*.

"This is our life whenever we celebrate the birth of the Prophet," he said. "We've gotten used to it. Some of us are lulled to sleep while reading the Koran at the mosque."

But for Muslims, such an act of self-denial is still nowhere near the patience, discipline and tolerance of their beloved Prophet.

WHAT TO FILE

❖**Form No. 1700**

Annual Income Tax Return for Individuals Earning Compensation Income (by individuals not qualified for substitute filing)

❖**Form No. 1701Q**

Quarterly Income Tax Return For Self-Employed, Estates And Trusts (including those with both Business and Compensation Income)

❖**Form No. 1701**

Annual Income Tax Return for Self-Employed, Estates and Trusts (including those with both Business and Compensation Income)

❖**Form No. 1702**

Annual Income Tax Return for Corporations and Partnerships

MODES OF PAYMENT

- **OVER THE COUNTER TAX PAYMENTS**
  ❖CASH; ❖ CHECK; ❖PARTIAL CASH/CHECK AND TAX DEBIT MEMO (DULY AND VALIDLY ISSUED BY BIR))
- **REVENUE COLLECTION OFFICERS** *(IN AREAS WITH NO AABs)*
- **BANK DEBIT SYSTEM**
  A system whereby a taxpayer, through a bank debit memo/advice, authorizes withdrawals from an existing bank account for payment of tax liabilities.
- **ELECTRONIC FILING AND PAYMENT SYSTEM (eFPS)**
  An electronic processing and transmission of tax return information including attachments, and of taxes due to the government made through the internet via the BIR website.
- **EFFICIENT SERVICE MACHINE (ESM)**
  An automated and computerized kiosk developed by LandBank of the Philippines
- **MOBILE PAYMENT (G-CASH)**
  Just text: PAYBIR amount MPIN Tax Type Tax Form Return Period Tax Identification Number Taxpayer Branch Code Revenue District Office Code Registered Name
  Example:PAYBIR 500 1234 IT 1700 032805 123456789 000 039 JUAN B. DELA CRUZ

NOTICE TO eFPS TAXFILERS

- To address problems that may be encountered by eFPS taxpayers due to systems unavailability, especially during tax filing deadlines, the Bureau of Internal Revenue hereby authorizes all eFPS-AABs to accept over-the-counter tax returns and payments by e-FPS taxpayers.
- eFPS-AABs are hereby authorized to accept payments from eFPS taxpayers who are the banks' respective clients or eFPS taxpayers within their respective jurisdiction.
- Acceptance over-the-counter of tax returns and payments from eFPS taxpayers shall be effective upon declaration of system unavailability by the BIR-Information Systems Group through a Memorandum.

DEADLINE for FILING & PAYMENT

of Income Tax Return (ITR) for Taxable Year 2005 and Quarterly Income Tax Return for the 1st Quarter of 2006

APRIL

2006

Better be Informed Right NOW!

LOCATION OF LANDBANK OF THE PHILIPPINES EFFICIENT SERVICE MACHINES

LBP BRANCH	BANK CODE	ADDRESS	RR/RDO No.
San Juan	086-024	108 SML Bldg. N. Domingo St. San Juan, Manila	RDO 42-San Juan
Baclaran	086-025	RDO No. 52-Parañaque	RDO 52- Parañaque
East Avenue	086-058	QSGC Progress, 13 East Avenue, Q.C.	RDO 39-South, Q.C.
Intramuros	086-027	Palacio del Gobernador Bldg. Aduana Intramuros Manila	RDO 33-Intramuros
Caloocan	086-060	Along Samson Rd. Caloocan	RDO 27- Caloocan
Dau	086-244	McArthur Hiway Dau, Mabalacat, Pampanga	RDO 21-San Fernando,Pampanga
Malabon	086-070	Concordia 684 Rizal Extn .Malabon	RDO 26- Malabon/Navotas
Cainta	086-129	Brookeshield Hills Subd., Cainta , Rizal.	RDO46- Cainta, Taytay
Concepcion	086-184	618 J. Rizal St. Conception, Marikina	RDO45-Marikina
Makati Tellering Booth	086-296	G/F The Atrium Makati, Makati Avenue, Makati City	RR 8- Makati
Calamba	086-051	Brgy. Real National Rd. Cal. Laguna	RDO 56-Calamba, Laguna
Mandaluyong	086-057	Shaw Blvd., cor., San Clemente, Mand.	RDO 41- Mandaluyong
Novaliches	086-135	ENV Bldg., 1039 Quirino Highway Nova.	RDO 28- Novaliches
Pasig	086-071	Asionics 112 Shaw Boulevard Pasig	RDO 43- Pasig
Malolos Plaza	086-208	Old Sumapa, Malolos, Bulacan	RDO 25- Malolos, Bulacan
Las Pinas	086-139	263 Real St., Pamplona Las Piñas	RDO 53-Las Piñas-Muntinlupa
Iloilo	086-002	Coner Iznart & Solis Sts. Iloilo	RDO 74-Iloilo City
Cebu	086-014	Jones Avenue, P. del Rosario, Cebu City	RR 13-Cebu
Olongapo	086-041	1070 Rizal Ave., East Tapianac, Olongapo	RDO 18- Olongapo City
Baguio	086-022	Harrison Road, Baguio	RDO 8- Baguio City
Trece Martirez	086-164	Indang Trece Road., Trece Martirez Cavite	RDO 54-Trece Martirez City
Capas	086-247	Bgy. Sto Domingo, II, Capas, Tarlac	RDO 17- Tarlac, Tarlac
Cabanatuan	086-001	Calderon Gen. Tinio Cabanatuan	RDO 23- Cabanatuan City
Lapu-Lapu	086-112	MEPZ, Admin Bldg , National Hiway, Pajo, Lapu-Lapu, Mandaue	RDO 80- Mandaue City
Tagum	086-036	Nat'l Highway, Tagum Davao del Norte	RDO 112- Tagum City
Lucena	086-020	Quezon Avenue, Lucena City	RDO 60- Lucena City
Binan	086-185	Bonifacio, CAnlalay, Binan, Laguna	RDO 57- San Pedro, Laguna
Tuguegarao	086-011	Nat'l Highway San Gabriel, Tuguegarao	RDO 13-Tuguegarao, Cagayan
General Santos	086-017	CCC Bldg., Nat'l Highway Gen. Santos	RDO 110- Gen Santos City
Davao	086-015	CM Recto cor., Rizal Davao	RDO 113- Davao City

BANK ADVISORY

Banking Hours are extended up to 5:00 p.m. for the period from April 1 to April 17, 2006

AUTHORIZED AGENT BANKS (AABs)

- Allied Bank
- Banco de Oro *
- Bank of America
- Bank of the Philippine Islands *
- Bank of Commerce
- China Bank (via BancNet) *
- Citibank*
- Development Bank of the Philippines *
- Equitable-PCI Bank *
- International Exchange Bank
- Landbank of the Philippines *
- Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. *
- Philippine Bank of Communication*
- Philippine National Bank *
- Philtrust Bank*
- Philippine Veterans Bank
- Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. *
- Security Bank Corp. *
- Standard Chartered Bank (via BancNet) *
- United Coconut Planters Bank
- Union Bank of the Philippines *

* *eFPS Authorized Agent Banks.*

For further inquiries please VISIT the BIRwebsite at www.bir.gov.ph

or CALL
BIR Contact Center at 981-8888
Taxpayer Information and Education Division at 926-3866 / 981-7248 to 7250
Collection Programs Division at 926-3815 / 928-3488

A PUBLIC SERVICE OF THE
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE

Suspect in police officer's ambush in Pasig falls

By Luige A. del Puerto

ONE OF THE ALLEGED GUNMEN who shot Chief Insp. Renato Marasigan dead late last month was arrested on Friday in Caloocan City.

A police officer working on the case said the suspect was identified by two witnesses as among those who ambushed Marasigan, deputy chief of the Internal Affairs Service-Intelligence and Investigation Unit based in Camp Crame, in Pasig City on March 29.

Police, however, withheld the identity of the suspect until he was formally charged before the prosecutor's office.

An informant had told police he had been offered a "job" to kill someone by the suspect.

A week later, the man who made the offer showed the informant a newspaper clipping of Marasigan's murder.

"Buddy, you didn't come along. This was worth P500,000," the informant quoted the suspect as saying, according to the officer.

The police then placed the suspect under surveillance. One of the two witnesses later went with the police and positively identified the suspect, the officer said.

"Mrs. Marasigan also identified him as someone who had followed her and her husband one or two days before Marasigan was killed," the officer said.

Marasigan was driving his bullet-proof Mitsubishi Pajero and was slowing down at the corner of Jabson and Jacinto Streets in front of a health center at Barangay Malinao, Pasig City, when four men wearing maroon shirts walked up to him and opened fire.

To make sure he was dead, one of the gunmen walked to Marasigan's side, opened the door and fired another round to his head.

Before he was shot dead, Marasigan had written an open letter to his colleagues in the Pasig "Elite" Police Brotherhood Association Inc. lamenting how the luster of the city police had been steadily dimming.

"The glory that we have managed to enjoy for almost two decades ... has plummeted to zero level," he had said in his letter.

Prior to his death, Marasigan was also the spokesperson of the IAS panel that investigated officers from the Traffic Management Office who shot and killed three suspected carjackers in Pasig City in November.

The panel, according to IAS chief Inspector General Alexis Canonizado, had found various degrees of culpability on the part of the officers.

BUT DID THEY GET A TIP?

Fr. Jerry Orbos SVD serves guests at the P1,000-a-plate dinner organized by priests to raise funds for the rehabilitation of the 75-year-old Christ the King Seminary building on E. Rodriguez Avenue in Quezon City. Father Jerry and 15 other SVD priests waited on 100 tables, with the help of the XVD, an organization of ex-SVD seminarians who are led by their president Elmer Sarmiento (standing to the right of Orbos).

ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Officer who refused suspected smuggler's bribe gets promoted

EVERY GOOD DEED IS ULTImately rewarded, in one way or another.

For Insp. Pedro Velasco, the police officer who could not afford to send his three sons to college but who refused a P300,000 bribe one Sunday last month, that reward came unexpectedly over the weekend.

"The chief PNP was very happy about what he did," said Supt. Benjamin de los Santos, Velasco's immediate superior at the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

"Inspector Velasco is getting a spot promotion," De los Santos told the INQUIRER.

Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao confirmed the news at noontime.

Lomibao has referred Velasco's case to the PNP Promotions Board and, if nothing gets in the way, the police chief said he would "promote him tomorrow (Monday)."

"He deserves it," Lomibao said. "This will serve as an inspiration to our people, (and) not only to the police but to the entire government bureaucracy."

Velasco in early March had headed a three-man team that arrested Samuel Lee, an importer with alleged ties to Malacañang who was suspected of being a smuggler.

While undergoing investigation, the police said, Lee approached Velasco and offered him P300,000 in P1,000 bills wrapped in a piece of yellow plastic. SPO1 Albino Cea Jr. was in Velasco's office at the time.

"I told him, 'Samuel Lee, ever since I joined the force, I never dreamed of accepting bribe money.' I told him right there and then that I was arresting him on charges of bribery," recalled Velasco of the events that transpired in his nearly bare office.

Lee, he said, had "insulted" him.

The police subsequently charged the importer with direct bribery before the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office.

For Lomibao, Velasco's act reaffirmed his belief there were honest government employees out there and they "deserve to be emulated and honored."

"Colonel De los Santos called and told me to report to Chief Supt. Edgardo Acuña. He said I'll be given an award or promotion. It's not clear which, but I'm very happy. Thank you very much," said Velasco, who has served the military and the police a combined total of 32 years.

Acuña is with the Directorate for Personnel and Records Management (DPRM).

Police spokesperson Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said the DPRM was preparing the promotion order.

Velasco, 54, is retiring in March 2008. His salary is P28,000 a month but loan payments leave only P10,000 to take home.

Because of this, he was unable to send his three sons to college. Instead, he taught them how to drive so they could earn a living. This way they were able to send the youngest child, a girl, to college where she finished accountancy. *Luige A. del Puerto*

4 policemen face kidnap raps

PROSECUTORS SAID SUNDAY THEY PLAN TO FILE criminal charges against four Manila police officers over the 2004 abduction of a local businessman.

Kidnapping and robbery charges would be filed Monday against Insp. Carlos Perez and police officers Jaime Aquino, Rafaelito Corre and Joselito Sebastian, all members of the intelligence section of the Manila police, said Senior State Prosecutor Philip Kimpo.

Four civilians were also indicted over the kidnapping of businessman Jose Tan Ong, who was arrested by the officers in May 2004 allegedly for a traffic violation.

The officers could face the death penalty if convicted.

Ong, who survived the ordeal, and his wife told investigators the four officers and their civilian accomplices handcuffed and blindfolded him and brought him to Manila police headquarters where they demanded a ransom for his release.

The policemen allegedly sought P10 million from Ong's wife otherwise he would be charged with drug dealing, Kimpo said. They also took his watch, mobile phone and cash, he said.

The couple later agreed to pay a fifth of the amount demanded, with the wife, Myrna Ong, delivering the money to the police station after she sold two of their cars. Her husband was later freed with a warning not to report the abduction. *AFP*

LOTTO RESULT

EZ2	SUERTRES
3 14	5 9 2

(Results above in exact order)

SUPERLOTTO 6/49

12 20 36 37 38 41

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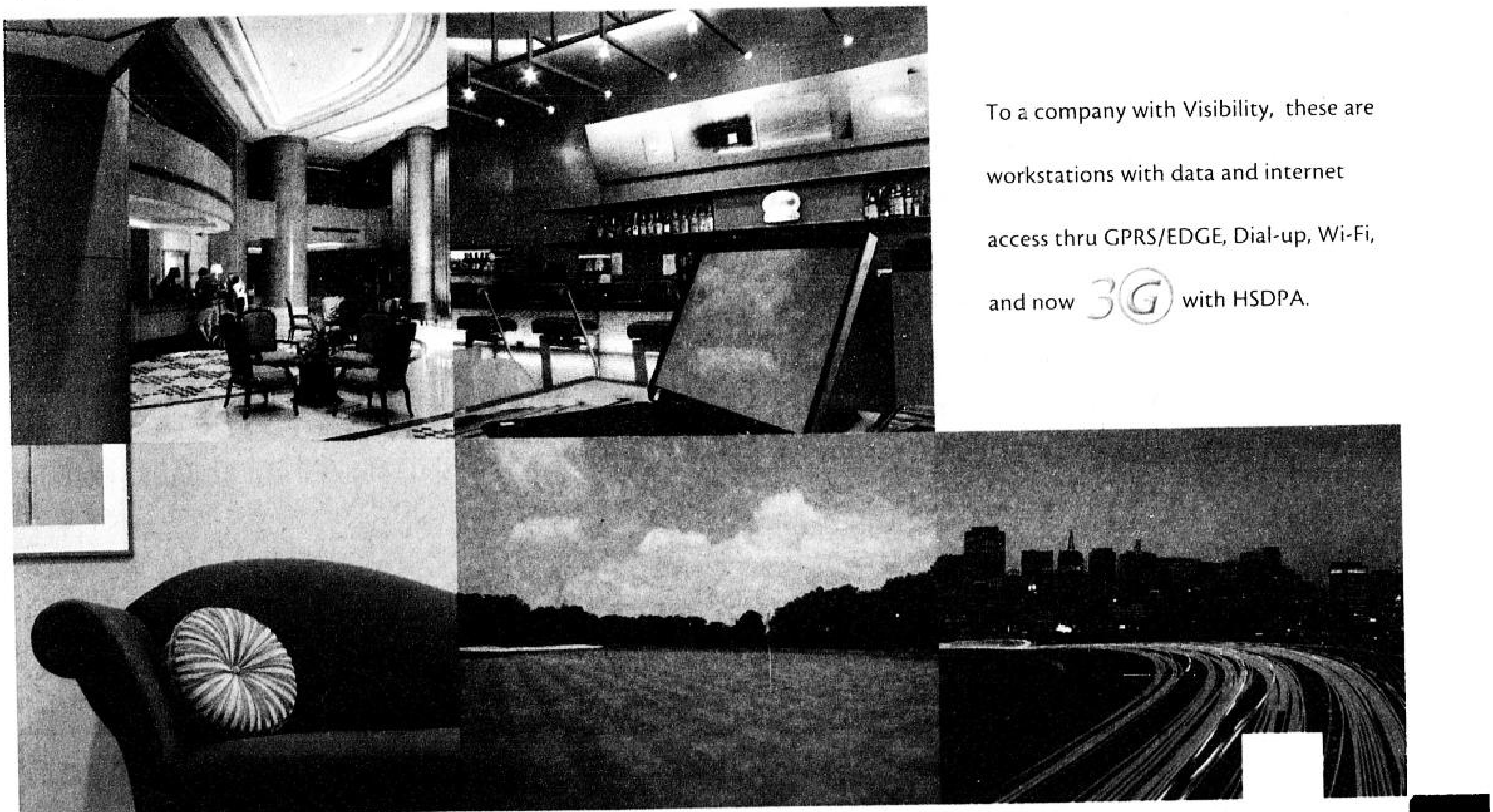

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200 houses lost in fire

By Tarra V. Quismundo

SPREAD BY GUSTY WINDS THAT DEVOURED everything in its path, a fire razed some 200 houses in a densely populated compound along a major highway in Parañaque City last Saturday.

An unidentified woman was killed while some 600 families were left homeless when the fire hit the compound at the corner of Linotype Street and Dr. A. Santos Avenue (formerly Sucat Road) in the Fourth Estate Subdivision.

The woman reportedly died after suffering a heart attack.

P20-million damage

Supt. Sofia Mendoza, District 3 Fire Marshal of the Bureau of Fire Protection, said the blaze was the biggest yet to hit the southern part of the metropolis this year. She estimated the total damage to property at P20 million.

"The wind was blowing hard so the fire spread quickly, and many houses were made of light materials. It [residential area] occupied a whole block that was on the main road and it really affected traffic because fire trucks had to use lanes in both directions," Mendoza said.

The blaze began at a few minutes past 7 p.m. and was placed under control before midnight.

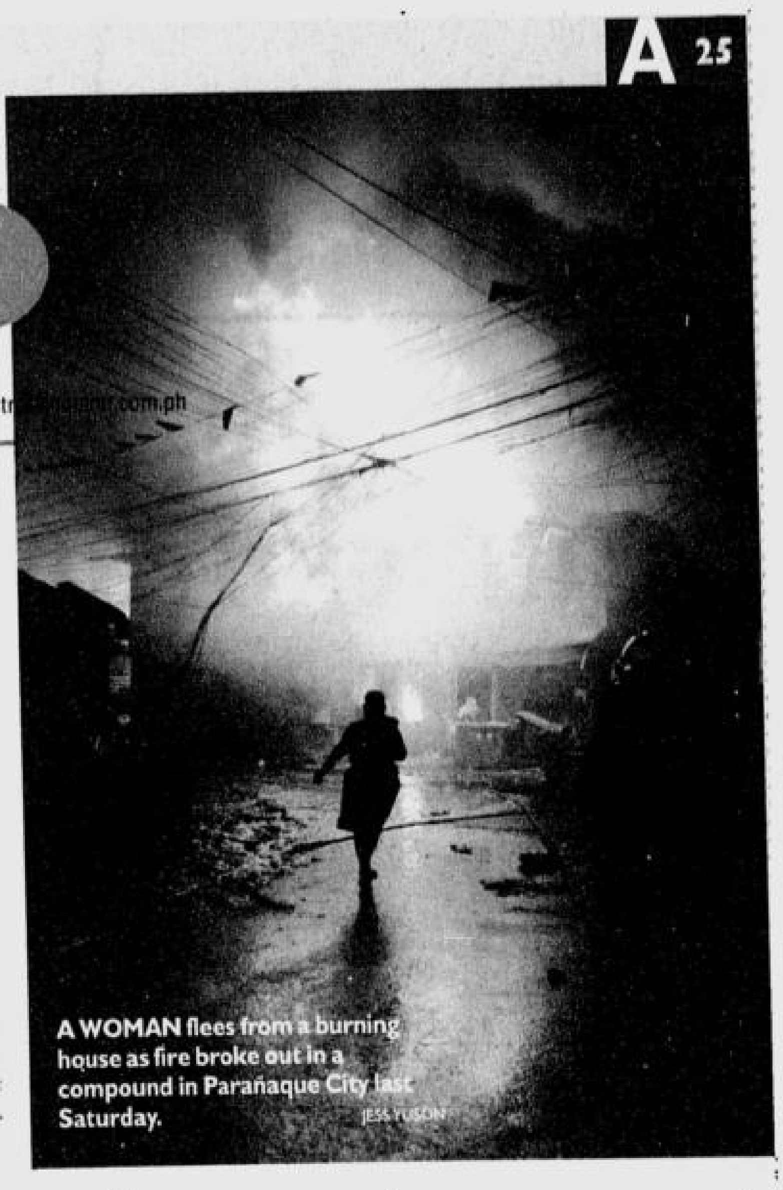
The district chief said initial investigation showed that the fire may have started either inside the Bisig Sa Nayon chapel or an adjacent house.

Still under investigation

Mendoza said they were still trying to determine what caused the fire.

"We found it hard to reach the houses because the streets leading inside the compound were narrow and we had to connect several hoses just to reach the site," she told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

Just an hour after the first team of firemen arrived at the scene, the alarm was raised to general status, the highest level. Mendoza said responding fire trucks—20 from the BFP and 17 from fire volunteers—had a difficult time getting to the site because of the heavy traffic on Dr. A Santos Avenue, the main access road.



A WOMAN flees from a burning house as fire broke out in a compound in Parañaque City last Saturday. JESS YUSON

Policeman, 2 cohorts nabbed for extortion in Rizal

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A POLICEMAN WORKING FOR THE BUreau of Immigration and two other men were arrested by the Binangongan police on Saturday for allegedly extorting money from Indian nationals in Rizal.

"They would approach their victims and pretend to verify their papers. But they would detain them for several days and extort money before releasing their victims," Binangonan Police chief Supt. Raymond Oliquiano told the INQUIRER in Filipino.

Police caught up with the group on Saturday morning, when Amandeep Singh, 35, spotted two of his fellow Indian nationals—Harvinder and Jaskaran Singh—inside a Mitsubishi Lancer parked on Manila East Road in Barangay Batingan, Binangonan. Suspects Vincent Goloran, 29, and Dennis Balbin, 39, were also inside the vehicle.

Harvinder and Jaskaran had been mssing after being "arrested" by four men who identified themselves as immigration officers on Thursday morning.

The suspects had demanded P400,000 from their relatives for their release.

Amandeep quickly went to the police who arrested the suspects, Oloquiano said. Goloran and Balbin were being interrogated at the police station when Insp. Rex Infante, 29, showed up. The two Indian nationals, upon seeing him, quickly identified him as the leader of the group.

DOJ pushes filing of raps vs drug suspect

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE HAS finally recommended the filing of charges against a suspected drug trafficker who was arrested last February for possession of P53 million worth of ketamine hydrochloride.

State Prosecutor Florencio de la Cruz Jr. recommended that Indian businessman Harris Abichandi be indicted for violating Section 11, Article II, or possession of dangerous drugs, of the Comprehensive Drugs Act of 2002.

"We are happy with this new development," National Bureau of Investigation Special Task Force chief Reynaldo Esmeralda, whose unit arrested and filed the charges against the suspect, said in an interview.

"It would have been a shame had a big-time drug trafficker been released because of a mere technicality," he added.

Esmeralda last week expressed concern that Abichandi may be released "due to a technicality" after the suspect filed a petition of habeas corpus for his immediate release before the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 55.

The NBI official explained that the petition was filed because the DOJ had not formally charged the suspect since he was subjected to inquest proceedings last Feb. 16.

NBI agents arrested Abichandi, 47, last Feb. 15 in his house in Merville Subdivision, Parañaque City where 53,304 vials of liquid ketamine hydrochloride were confiscated.

Esmeralda said they had received a tip from an informant that a large volume of the dangerous drug had arrived from India and passed through the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

After confirming that the shipment was delivered to the suspect, NBI STF agents immediately applied for a search warrant and raided Abichandi's house.

NBI officials had explained that several Indians engaged in the illegal activity could have imported the dangerous drugs from their home country while Taiwanese or Chinese drug traffickers buy the vials from them for processing into powder form.

The finished products, popularly known as "K," are then shipped to Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, where they have gained notoriety, along with Ecstasy tablets, as party drugs.

QC solon not misusing public funds

THE LAWYER OF QUEZON CITY REP. NANETTE Castelo-Daza yesterday denied the charges of a former employee that she was using public funds to pay the wages of her house help and the employees of her brother's pizza parlor.

Alfredo Villamor said Daza's accuser, Richell Vineles, wanted to get back at the congresswoman because she and her brother, Melencio Castelo Jr., had worked for the removal of his name from the payroll of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Villamor told the INQUIRER that Vineles was hired to work as a supervisor at the "Buns and Pizza" franchise owned by Castelo in November. Unknown to Castelo and Daza, however, Vineles was also in the payroll of the MMDA as a traffic enforcer although he never reported to the agency, the lawyer added.

When the congresswoman and her brother learned about Vineles' employment with the MMDA in February, they asked the agency to remove him from its payroll, Villamor said. *DJ Yap*

METROBRIEFS

Beaten to death

A MARKET porter was mauled to death by a drinking buddy on Saturday in Quezon City. Reymario Radam, 47, was drinking beer with fellow workers at Cloverleaf Market in Balintawak when an argument ensued between him and Ronnie Ausmolo, 29, a scavenger. Tempers flared, until the two began exchanging blows, according to a report by PO3 Joseph Diño of the criminal investigation division of the Quezon City Police District. The suspect overpowered Radam and landed several punches on his body until he slumped onto the ground, Diño said. Ausmolo quickly fled the scene, while Radam's relatives rushed him to the Quezon City General Hospital where he was declared dead on arrival by Dr. Engelbert Ednacot. Barangay watchmen led by Alexander Cumbre later caught Ausmoldo and brought him to Camp Karingal, where he is now detained, police said.

DJ Yap

Man's body found

AN UNIDENTIFIED man in his late 30s was discovered dead on a grassy patch on Commonwealth Avenue between Seameo Innotech and the University of the Philippines Asian Institute of Tourism on Saturday. Passersby found the man, with dried blood on his nose, lying on his belly at about 5:20 p.m., according to police. He was described to be heavily built, with crewcut hair and about 5'4" in height. He wore a blue shirt, camouflage shorts, a black leather belt and red slippers. On his left shoulder was a tattoo which read "Bobby," police said. Aside from the blood on the man's nose, no other sign of external injury was found on his body. The body was taken to the Urban Funeral Homes.

DJ Yap

Church feast day

THE RESURRECTION of Our Lord Parish Church in Parañaque City will mark its feast day on Easter Sunday, April 16, with a whole-day celebration filled with activities. These include a fun run at 6 a.m., followed by tennis and chess tournaments, basketball and volleyball games to be held at the BF multipurpose gym in front of the church. Children can also join the traditional Easter egg hunt and other games which will begin at 8 a.m. Cash and other prizes await the winners. At 5 p.m., a Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Jesse Mercado followed by a concert featuring live bands and the Kenaniah Choir. Registration for the Easter games is ongoing at the parish office until April 12.

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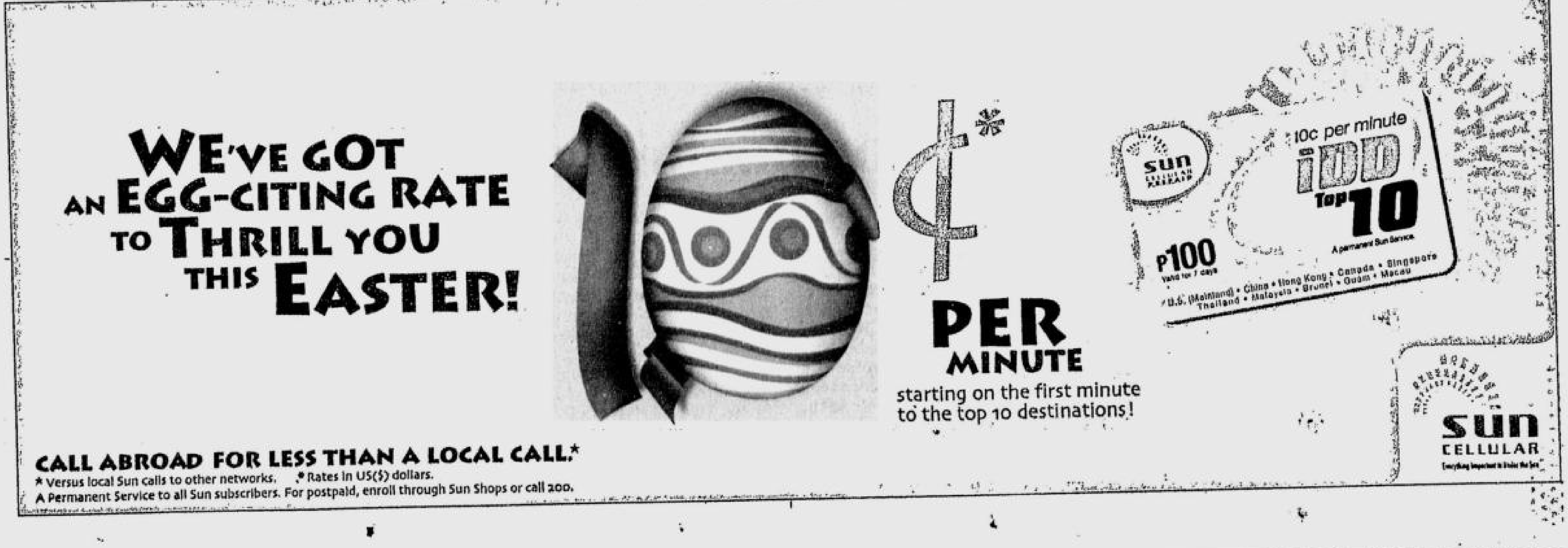

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Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

The WORLD

US stepping up plans to attack Iran, report says

WASHINGTON—THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, which publicly advocates negotiations to halt Iran's nuclear program, is accelerating military planning for possible attacks against Iran, and has not ruled out using tactical nuclear weapons, according to a new article.

The article, by Seymour M. Hersh in The New Yorker, asserts that the Pentagon this winter presented the White House with an option to use bunker-buster nuclear bombs against Iran's underground nuclear sites. When the Joint Chiefs of Staff later sought to drop that option, unnamed officials at the White House resisted, the article stated.

The article cites numerous anonymous sources, including former Pentagon and intelligence officials, as well as sources described as having ties to the Pentagon but no direct involvement in its decision-making.

Asked about the article, Frederick Jones, a National Security Council spokesperson, said on Saturday: "We're not going to discuss military planning. As the president has said repeatedly, we along with the international community are pursuing a diplomatic solution to the issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program."

But four Pentagon, military, and administration officials who participate in high-level deliberations on Iran and who were granted anonymity to speak candidly rejected the article's contention that the Bush administration was considering nuclear weapons in a possible strike against Iran.

The article asserts that American carrier-based attack planes have been flying simulated nuclear-bomb runs within range of Iranian coastal radars. A Pentagon official said he was unaware of any such flights, but added that within the last three weeks Iran had ratcheted up its air defenses so high that it accidentally attacked one of its own aircraft. *NYT*

N. Korea warns it can also launch preemptive hit on US

KIM IL-CHOL AP

SEOUL—NORTH KOREA's defense chief has lashed out at "hostile" US policy toward Pyongyang and warned the communist country could also launch a preemptive attack.

The warning from Kim Il-chol came at a meeting Saturday to mark the 13th anniversary of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's reign as chairman of the country's powerful National Defense Commission, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

"A preemptive attack is not monopoly of the US and North Korea will never sit idle till it is exposed to a preemptive attack of the US," the defense minister said.

"The US is now talking about the six-party talks but in fact, it is zealously inciting hostility toward North Korea while floating all sorts of sheer fictions, utterly indifferent to the talks," he said.

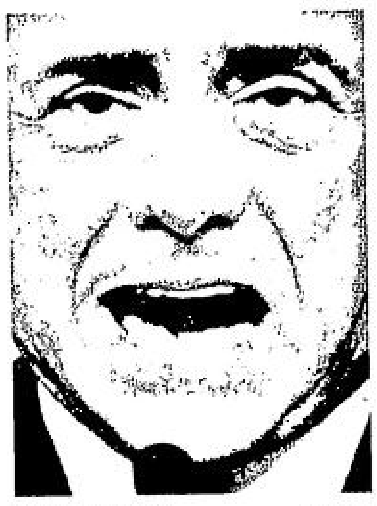
He accused Washington of "watching for every chance to attack Pyongyang after listing it as a target of preemptive attack.

"It is the traditional combat method of North Korea to directly counter the pressure and threat of aggression from the enemies, without yielding to them," he said.

The accusations came as top negotiators from six nations involved in efforts to end North Korea's weapons drive were gathering in Tokyo for a regional security conference. *AFP*

CENTER-LEFT coalition leader Prodi at the last campaign day. AP

Italian polls may unseat Berlusconi



BERLUSCONI REUTERS

ROME—ITALIANS ENTERED THE polling booths at 8 a.m. on Sunday for a general election that could unseat Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi after five years of economic stagnation.

Voters made a brisk start, lining up outside polling stations to be among the first to place their ballots in a two-day election which could see the return to power of Romano Prodi, leader of a wide center-left coalition.

Opinion polls have not been published in two weeks, but Prodi has led Berlusconi for the past two years after returning to Italian politics from a five-year stint as president of the European Commission.

Berlusconi, the US government's strongest ally in continental Europe and Italy's richest man, still hopes his promises of tax cuts will swing a surprise victory. But even he spoke of possible defeat in the final days of campaigning.

If poll forecasts are borne out, power will pass from the flamboyant Berlusconi to the mild-mannered Prodi who promises tax breaks for Italian companies and to withdraw troops from Iraq quickly.

Polls were due to remain open until 10 p.m. on Sunday and then open again on Monday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Exit polls will be released minutes after that, with the official results likely to be clear in the late evening. *Reuters*

SOME 120 12-year-old junior high school boys bow their heads to Toyota Motor honorary chairman Shoichiro Toyoda (not pictured) as he declares the founding of the Kaiyo Academy, during its opening ceremony in Gamagori, Aichi Prefecture, April 8. AFP

Japan opens Eton-inspired elite boarding school

GAMAGORI, JAPAN—JAPAN ON Saturday opened an elite boarding school modelled on Britain's Eton, hoping to groom future leaders away from video-games, comics and other favorite pastimes of Japanese youth.

Some 120 12-year-old boys in crisp black uniforms and ties entered the first class of the Kaiyo Academy in a ceremony with their parents, who will pay three million yen ($25,500) annually for each student.

The six-year school in central Aichi prefecture was set up amid concern by some parents of slipping standards in Japan, which in 2002 launched a drive to make education more relaxed and cut back on rote learning.

"The Kaiyo Academy aims to nurture people who will be able to lead Japan in the future," said Toyota Motor honorary chairman Shoichiro Toyoda, a driving force behind the project.

"I want you to build a base so you can play an active role not only in Japan, but also abroad," Toyoda told the academy, which is based in the same province as the leading automaker.

Toyoda spearheaded an initiative that raised 20 billion yen ($170 million) in corporate donations to build the sprawling school on reclaimed land in a bay.

The academy was inspired by Eton College, the prestigious school in England that has trained elites since its founding in the 15th century.

"These 123 students are little acorns now. But they will be great trees by the time they graduate in six years," said George Fussey, an Eton biology teacher who will instruct at the Kaiyo Academy for a year. *AFP*

PONTES REUTERS

Brazil's first astronaut returns to Earth

NEAR ARKALYK, KAZAKHSTAN—The Soyuz space capsule carrying Brazil's first astronaut Marcos Pontes, as well as US astronaut William MacArthur and Russian cosmonaut Valery Tokarev from the International Space Station (ISS), landed in Kazakhstan early Sunday, space officials said.

The Soyuz, which had commenced its return journey to Earth at 00:28 a.m. Moscow time (2028 GMT Saturday), landed in the steppes of Kazakhstan in Central Asia at 3:48 a.m. Moscow time, officials said.

Tokarev was the first to exit the capsule, followed by Pontes and MacArthur, and all three were whisked away into a tent pitched in the wind-swept steppe for their comfort, an AFP journalist at the scene reported.

"It was worth it to be in the mission," Pontes said.

Pontes, a 43-year-old air force officer, blasted off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on March 30. MacArthur and Tokarev had each spent 189 days aboard the ISS.

Fifteen Russian helicopters and planes as well as an American flying hospital and several all-terrain vehicles were amassed at the site to come to the men's assistance, Maj. Gen. Vladimir Popov of Russia's aviation and cosmic search and rescue service said earlier.

US astronaut Jeffrey Williams and Russian cosmonaut Pavel Vinogradov remain in orbit on the ISS. *AFP*

No al-Qaida part in London bombings

LONDON—AL-QAIDA PLAYED no part in the London bombings last July, instead they were planned on a low budget from information off the Internet, the leaked findings of an inquiry into the blasts revealed Sunday.

The Observer newspaper, reporting the leak, said the government probe into Britain's worst terrorist attack concluded that it was a "simple and inexpensive" plot dreamt up by four suicide bombers intent on martyrdom.

The first forensic account of the July 7 bombings, which killed 52 people, found it was the product of a small-scale operation by the four men alone rather than an international terror network, according to the Observer.

The newspaper cited the first draft of the government's definitive report into the blasts. The findings are due to be published in full in a few weeks.

"The London attacks were a modest, simple affair by four seemingly normal men, using the Internet," a government source told the weekly newspaper.

This conclusion will likely alarm the authorities by revealing Britain's vulnerability to an attack by such an inexperienced group.

Mohammad Sidique Khan, 30, Shehzad Tanweer, 22, Hasib Hussain, 18, and Germaine Lindsay, 19, are thought to have blown up three London Underground trains and one double-decker bus during the morning rush hour on July 7 by detonating bombs packed into rucksacks.

The official inquiry found that these weapons cost just a few hundred pounds to make.

It also discounted the existence of a fifth bomber—a theory that was raised following the discovery of an explosive knapsack in the car used by the four attackers and abandoned at a station north of London.

As for any possible support from the terrorist network al-Qaida, the inquiry dismisses a videotape of Khan—the ringleader—that emerged after the attacks and also featured al-Qaida deputy Ayman al-Zawahri. *AFP*

CHILD holds a picture of Tommaso Onofri, the 17-month-old boy killed shortly after being kidnapped last March, during the toddler's funeral. AP

Mourners pack funeral for slain Italian toddler

PARMA, ITALY—THOUSANDS of mourners packed this northern city's cathedral on Saturday for the funeral of an epileptic toddler whose kidnapping and brutal murder shocked Italians.

"This is a funeral that I would never have wanted to celebrate," said Parma Bishop Cesare Bonicelli, who condemned the "lack of heart and evilness of the assassins."

"I am as shocked and anguished as you are," he said in an address at the beginning of the ceremony.

For a month, Italians had hoped for the safe return of curly haired 17-month-old Tommaso Onofri, snatched from his home near the northern city of Parma on March 2. Hopes were dashed when one of his alleged killers led police to the child's body last Saturday.

"During these weeks Tommy entered our homes, he became a little bit our son," Bonicelli said, speaking before a little white casket and a crowd of mourners so large it spilled out of the cathedral.

More than 10,000 people showed up to show support for the little boy and his family, some carrying signs and pictures of the toddler. Italy's Civil Protection agency distributed postcards with a photograph of the little boy, and some people wept as the funeral car drove up to the church. *AP*

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FRANCHISE MARKETING CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR

Receiving the award are (from left) Emmanuel E. Viado - Nat'l. Fanchise Dev't. Manager-JFC, Raoul E. Polancos - Nat'l. Mktg. Manager-JFC and Virgilio G. Espeleta - Pres. & COO-JFC. Presenters are (from left) Jose Pardo - Founding Chairman PFA and Atty. Miguel Varela - Chairman PCCI

FRANCHISEE OF THE YEAR - Ritchie Hawak (JBS Batangas)

Receiving the award are (2nd from left) Alvin & Ritchie Hawak-Franchisee of the Year and (right) Virgilio G. Espeleta - Pres. & COO-JFC. Presenters are (from left) Jose Ma. Concepcion III - Presidential Consultant for Entrepreneurship & Pres. & CEO, RFM Corp., Sorayda Alonzo - DTI-USEC and Manuel Siggaoat - PFA VP-Finance

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Tigers edge Realtors

Favis charges go through wringer, prevail in extra time

GAMES SUNDAY (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:10 p.m.—Red Bull vs Alaska
6:30 p.m.—Talk N Text vs Air21

By June Navarro

KEY TIGER: John Arigo

WINNING AN ALL-STAR coaching plum is no stroll in the park.

Coach Binky Favis found out last night when his Coca-Cola Tigers went through the wringer before downing Sta. Lucia Realty in overtime, 108-104, in the Gran Matador-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

"I never thought it would be this hard to earn that stint," said Favis after the Tigers nailed a sixth victory in eight games that made him the second rookie coach—after Sta. Lucia's Alfrancis Chua in 1999—to call the shots in an All-Star game.

"But this is not possible without the help and sacrifice of my players. I owe this to them."

In the nightcap, San Miguel Beer defeated Barangay Ginebra, 103-94, for a league-leading 7-2 record. Ginebra dropped to 4-4.

John Arigo, Ali Peek and William Antonio shone for the Tigers as they exploited the absence of injured Realtors Kenneth Duremdes (sprained ankle), Dennis Espino (inflamed hand) and Marlou Aquino (hurting leg).

Arigo, who buried a three-pointer off Jimwell Torion and Chester Tolomia with 7.2 ticks left to force the extension at 93-all, finished with 28 points on top of six rebounds and four assists.

Peek also had 28 points while grabbing 11 rebounds, and Antonio, who made seven of his nine attempts from three-point range, added 23 points.

Favis will face San Miguel Beer's Jong Uichico in the All-Star weekend slated April 27-29 in Cagayan De Oro City.

The scores:

First Game

COCA-COLA 108—Peek 29, Arigo 28, Antonio 23, Miranda 9, Reavis 6, Singson 5, Wainwright 4, Mamaril 2, Abarrientos 2.

STA. LUCIA 104—Mendoza 20, Cabagnot 16, Callmag 14, Gonzales 14, tolomia 12, Omolon 9, Torion 9, Catli 8, Agapito 2, Aquino 0.

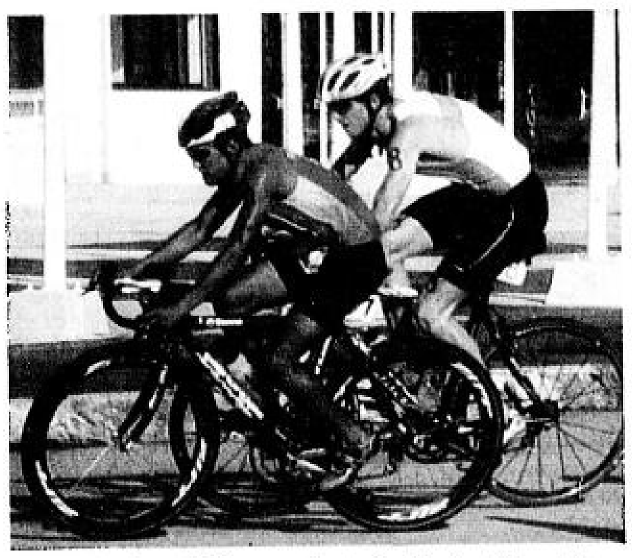
Quarters: 21-19, 38-39, 64-67, 93-93 (reg), 108-104

Second Game

SAN MIGUEL 103—Seigle 21, Peña 19, Ildefonso 16, Hontiveros 15, Racela 13, Cablay 9, Calaguio 6, Adriano 4, Kong 0, Noble 0.

GINEBRA 94—Menk 26, Caguioa 24, Adducul 19, Helterbrand 16, Salvacion 5, Holper 4, Macapagal 0, Ramos 0, Ferreria 0, Sotto 0.

Quarters: 24-27, 52-47, 80-69, 103-94



RYAN Mendoza (left) passes Australian Raphael Baugh in the 10K bike segment en route to victory in Clark Field.

RP's Mendoza strikes again, seizes Asian Duathlon title

By Jasmine W. Payo

CLARK FIELD, PAMPANGA—Filipino Ryan Mendoza, exploiting his edge as a former cyclist, captured a second major regional title by ruling the Asian Duathlon Championship yesterday at the Clark Expo grounds here.

Fresh from a successful campaign in Thailand, Mendoza dominated the cycling phase of the 10K run-40K bike-5K run event to finish with a time of one hour 55 minutes and 47 seconds

"I just tried to keep pace in the first 10K of the run, because I knew that I could easily pull away in the bike leg," said Mendoza in Filipino.

Mendoza, a second class airman in the Philippine Air Force, who also ruled the Asian Duathlon Cup in Bangkok two weeks ago, came home nearly two minutes ahead of second-placer Kodo Hiramutso of Japan.

The 25-year-old Hiramatsu clocked 1:57:45 in an impressive show considering that he topped the Asian Aquathlon Championship just a day earlier at The Lakeshore in Mexico town.

Takashi Nakata of Japan, the champion in 2003, took third spot with a time of 1:58:24.

Checking home 20 seconds behind Nakata was another Filipino, Arland Macasieb, the Southeast Asian Games triathlon bronze medalist.

"At least it was a better finish," said Macasieb, who settled for seventh place in the run-swim-run aquathlon race on Saturday.

Lamuel Lau Ching-yin of Hong Kong, the winner in the under-23 age category, completed the top five in 1:59:19.

Nakata initially led the pack by completing the 10K run in 34:05 minutes, almost a full minute ahead of Mendoza.

But Mendoza gradually caught up with the Japanese in the bike leg and and then pulled away from his rivals by one minute and 15 seconds at the end of the third lap of the four-loop cycling race.

Guest entry Raphael Baugh of Australia received a special award for completing the race in second overall with a time of 1:57:11.

The national junior triathletes ruled the all-Filipino women's division with 16-year-old Mimi Lucas finishing first in 2:22:37 followed by 19-year-old Lea Coline Langit in 2:36:38.

Sen. Pia Cayetano, who also competed in the event, Triathlon Association of the Philippines president Tom Carrasco and Clark Development Corp. president Tony Ng awarded the medals during the closing ceremony.

Hapee-PCU rips Magnolia

GAMES TOMORROW (*San Andres Gym*)
2 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs TeleTech
4 p.m.—Rain or Shine vs Hapee-PCU

By Jasmine W. Payo

HAPEE-PCU TOOK COMMAND EARLY ON AND overwhelmed title-favorite Magnolia Spinners, 77-60, in the PBL Unity Cup yesterday at the Olivarez College Sports Center in Parañaque.

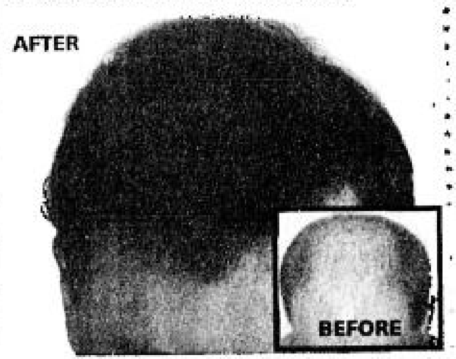
Speedy guard Jason Castro came up with an all-around performance of 13 points, seven rebounds and three assists as Hapee-PCU flashed impressive form despite the absence of a gout-stricken Junel Baculi, who was replaced by Jun Noel.

Earlier, Joseph Yeo capped a conference-high 27-point job with a triple in the final 20 seconds of overtime to give Harbour Centre its first victory, 84-81 over Granny Goose.

Yeo, a former La Salle standout, added seven rebounds, six assists and three steals as the Portmasters stopped their four-game slide.

Finally we got one," said Harbour coach Jorge Gallent. "The last four games were a puzzle to me but the

HAPEE-PCU/ A30



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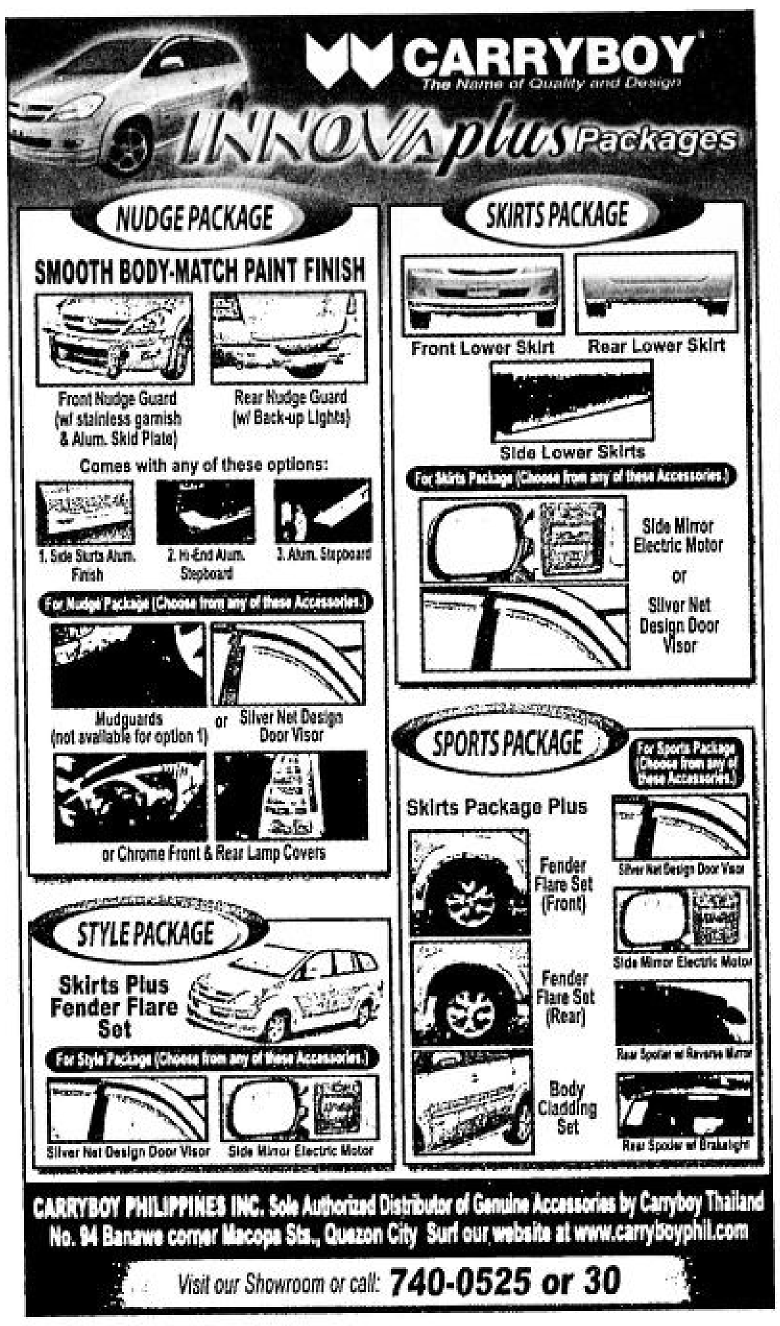

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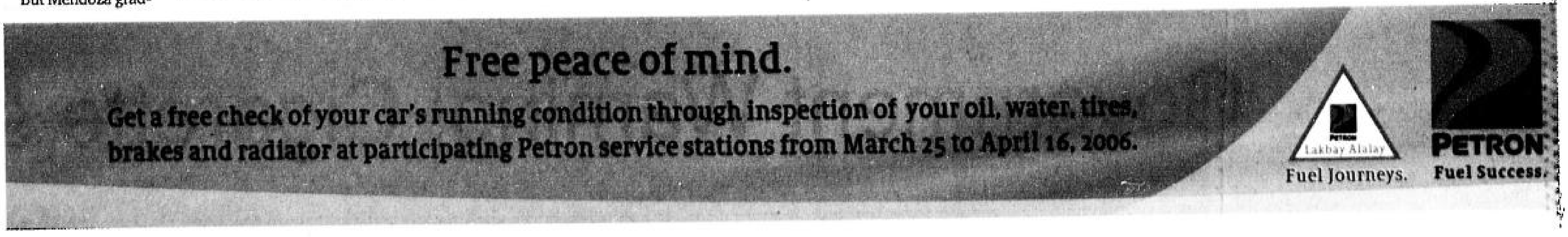

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Hapee downs Magnolia

From page A29

boys did not give up. They really persevered and worked so hard."

Chico Lanete contributed 19 markers for the Portmasters and Fil-Am center Rob Reyes collected 10 points, including four in the extra period, and 11 rebounds.

Magnolia, with Fil-Am center Kelly Williams scoring only seven points, dropped into a tie with Hapee-PCU and Granny Goose at 2-3.

The scores:

First game

HARBOUR CENTRE 84— Yeo 27, Lanete 19, Arana 13, Reyes 10, Gaco 6, Coching 4, Gamboa 2, Launzon 2, Kalerhofer 0, Tenorio 0, Chia 0, Alonzo.

GRANNY GOOSE 81—Grijaldo 14, Saldua 13, Dela Pena 12, Ibañez 11, Quinahan 9, Concha 8, Santos 5, David 5, Cruz 3, Alfad 1. Latonio 0, Bravo 0, Gavino 0.

Quarters: 20-18, 31-33, 56-57, 73-73 (reg), 84-81

Second Game

HAPEE-PCU 77—Castro 13, Espinas 12, Bucao 11, Gonzales 8, Baculi 7, Moreño 7, Belga 6, Solis 4, Garrido 4, Guevarra 3, Nailon 2, Canlas 0, Razon -0, Sanz 0, Amparado 0.

MAGNOLIA 60—Chan 17, Santos 12, Co 9, Williams 7, Jones 7, Isip 6, Te 1, Bombeo 1, Valenzuela 0, Dela Cruz 0, Cutler 0.

Quarters: 22-14, 38-31, 54-43, 77-60

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

DUE to space constraints, Manolo R. Iñigo's column, Clean Living, will come out tomorrow. — Ed

How to lose dirty by really trying

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH SUPER fighter Zab Judah failing in his world title defense?

Things simply went to form yesterday in glitter gambling town Las Vegas.

No jackpot sirens were sounded.

Judah just happened to be beaten by Floyd Mayweather Jr., candidate for the greatest pound-for-pound boxer of all time.

With Mayweather's awesome reputation, majority of the oddsmakers had refused to give Judah a ghost of a chance of reversing the expected ending.

As they put it, Judah had already lost the world welterweight crown before the first punch could be thrown in the championship match.

* * *

OK. Judah should've been content enough he was neither crushed nor torn to shreds by his extremely masterful foe.

There was nothing of the savage beating and the emotional pain suffered by Erik Morales when he was stopped by our very own Manny Pacquiao, also at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas.

It was a routine setback.

Judah could've easily shrugged off the defeat.

But hold it. Police sirens nearly sounded close to the end of the 12-round fight, in the 10th round to be exact.

Judah gave misery and frustration in a fight a dirty, unforgivable twist.

Judah, his face a mask of defeat, hit Mayweather below the belt.

* * *

No, correction, it was not a plain foul punch thrown in the 10th.

Judah did it with the foulest of intent, aiming, cocking his killer left for a crippler to Mayweather's groin.

As is always the case in a formal fight, Mayweather's testicles were heavily cased, guarded by a thick leather cup.

The victim recovered after a brief rest.

Still Judah gave a new evil twist to frustration in prizefighting.

He had sent the message across that the finest fighter deserves the foulest blow in professional boxing.

* * *

The blow was definitely intentional any which way you looked at it.

Judah also did not waste time. He promptly clubbed Mayweather, now limping breathless in pain, behind the head.

Had referee Richard Steele faltered the way Joe Cortez often did, Mayweather could've been knocked out cold.

Steele jumped in, grabbed and prevented what could've been an evil reign.

As could be expected, Floyd Sr. jumped into the ring with the menace of a wounded tiger.

But what we next saw was Judah charging onto the incensed old man.

* * *

You see, they talk endlessly of great stands, about unforgettable KO blows after a great fight.

Mayweather, no doubt, came up with another magnificent performance.

But, in the end, it was Judah's foul punch that would become the talk among fight experts.

Things do happen inside the boxing ring, Mayweather Jr. told the tall interviewer when asked about the foul blow.

He brushed off the foulness with a charming victory smile.

How Mayweather kept his cool, performed with utmost composure and control, after nearly being wrecked by the evil punch, would clearly enhance his legend.

He sustained his perfect record with his 36th win against no loss.

Zab Judah? He squandered and lost what little respect the boxing world had for him with that evil punch to the seat of a man's greatness.

'Big Fi in ma

SOUTH African Tim Clark uses the flag stick to mark his ball position on No. 6. He opted not to make a 3-foot birdie putt on No. 11—which would have tied him for the lead at 6 under—after the horn signalling the suspension of play sounded. AFP

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA—RAIN RETURNED TO Augusta National, and so did the thrills.

On an abbreviated but action-packed Saturday at the Masters, Chad Campbell played four holes without making a par—two birdies to expand his lead, two bogeys to nearly lose it—and remained atop the leaderboard with a growing list of major champions right behind him.

Storms softened the course and forced a four-hour delay in the third round, leaving Campbell enough daylight to spend only 40 minutes on a course that played nothing like the first two days. It was just enough time to set the tone for a marathon Sunday.

He was at 6 under par, one shot ahead of Tim Clark and Rocco Mediate.

Right behind was a forceful presence—defending champion Tiger Woods—in a position all too familiar.

Woods hit a wedge that spun back to 2 inches from the hole for a tap-in birdie on the third, and he caused the gallery to gasp with a pitch over the mounds and spun sideways when it neared the cup, stopping 5 feet away for another birdie on No. 8. That put him at 3 under through nine holes, three shots behind.

"I'm right there in the ball game," Woods said.

A year ago, Woods walked off the course four shots behind Chris DiMarco through nine holes, made four straight birdies on Sunday morning and went into the final 18 holes with a three-shot lead.

Tiger likes chances of slippin

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA—TIGER WOODS liked his chances of slipping into a fifth green jacket after a gritty third round charge at the weather-hit Masters on Saturday.

One of the fittest players on the PGA Tour, Woods will not be intimidated by the prospect of playing 27 holes Sunday on a course stretched to an imposing 7,445 yards, making it the second longest in major championship history.

It will be familiar territory for Woods, who last year rallied over 27 holes on Sunday before overhauling Chris DiMarco at the first extra hole to collect his fourth Masters crown.

In fact, the world No. 1 will have a little less work to do after going two-under on the front on Saturday to get within three shots of leader Chad Campbell before third round play was suspended due to failing light.

"Last year was last year," cautioned Woods. "Chad is playing great, so we are going to have to play great and make some birdies and keep it going.

"I made a few birdies a
have to make a few more

"In the soft conditions
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"I know I'm in conditio
going to be a problem."

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The players eagerly to
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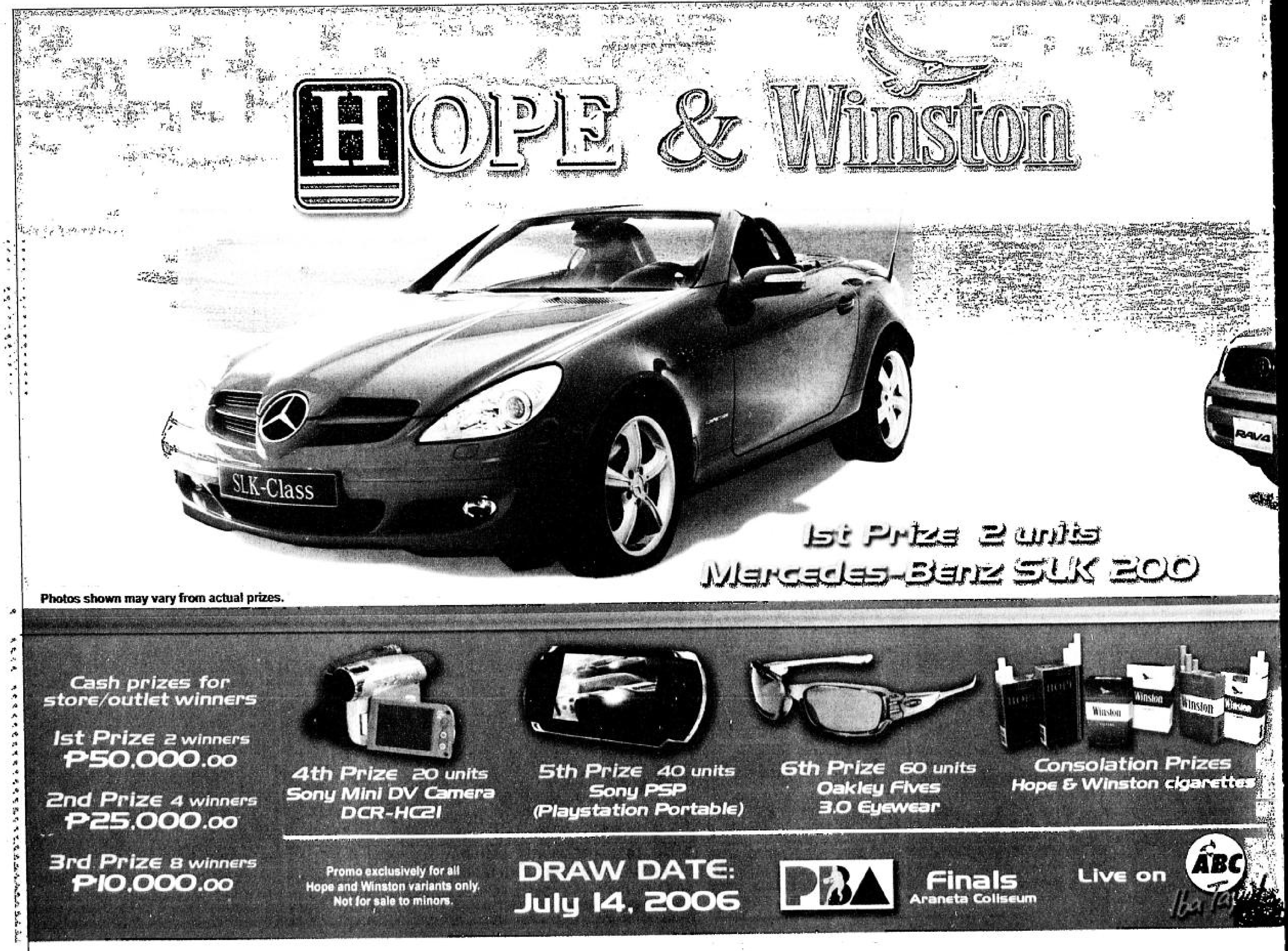

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ve' trail Campbell rathon final day

PLAY SUSPENDED

UMBRELLA DAY: Rain forces four-hour delay. AFP

This time, he has company.

Phil Mickelson birdied his first three holes, only to drop shots from the bunker on the next two to join Woods at 3 under, along with Padraig Harrington of Ireland. The other members of the "Big Five"—Vijay Singh, Ernie Els and Retief Goosen—were at 2 under, along with Fred Couples and Stephen Ames.

And don't rule out two other major champions—Mike Weir, at 1 under through 11 holes, or even Jim Furyk, one of only 11 players who managed to complete the third round.

Furyk got through 12 holes before thunder rumbled beyond the pines, suspending play for 4 hours, 5 minutes. He shot a 68 that put him at even-par 216.

Technically, that makes him the clubhouse leader.

Endurance figures to play a big role. Campbell and Mediate will have to play 32 holes, while everyone else within four shots of the lead play at least 27 holes. The third round is to resume at 7:45 a.m. EDT Sunday (early Monday morning in Manila).

"I think adrenaline will keep everybody going enough to get through it," said Stewart Cink, who was at even par through 12 holes. "If endurance comes into play, or maybe fatigue, it will be after the tournament is over."

It was the fifth straight year rain has interrupted play and changed the nature of Augusta National. Instead of firm conditions that made it difficult to hold the greens, rain allowed players to go at the flags.

Campbell couldn't get off the course soon enough. He opened with an 8-foot birdie putt and a two-putt birdie on the par-5 second, reaching 8 under par. But his wedge spun off the green at No. 3 leading to bogey, and he made bogey from the bunker on the fourth hole when his 6-foot par putt lipped out.

"It's where I want to be," he said.

Going for his third major in as many years, Mickelson came out firing with a shot from the fairway bunker into 10 feet, a nifty pitch to 4 feet on the second and a 15-foot birdie putt on the third hole that sent him soaring to the top of the leaderboard. But he dropped back down after missing a 4-foot par putt, followed by a drive into the trees on the fifth.

Mediate made it a two-shot swing on the par-3 fourth with a rare birdie. Still, he couldn't help but notice Woods lurking behind them.

"As long as he's upright, he's close," Mediate said.

AP

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When Woods finally made his appearance on the first tee he immediately pulled his opening shot into the left rough but quickly steadied himself and went about his task of reeling in the leaders.

After grinding out pars on the opening two holes, the 10-time major winner looked ready to mount one of his patented charges on the third after a brilliant chip left him an easy tap-in for birdie.

He continued his gritty effort with tough pars at the next five holes before picking up another shot at the eighth and closing with a par as the horn sounded to end play.

Woods's determined play is likely to have brought a smile to his father Earl's face. With Woods senior back home in California battling cancer, Tiger said one of his big motivations this week was to play some good golf, get in contention and on television hoping it might give his father a lift.

Woods will now look to carry that momentum over into Sunday.

"I have nine more holes to pop a good one round and then get something going in the last," said Woods.

Reuters

TIGER Woods grimaces after missing a birdie putt on the sixth green. REUTERS

Cavaliers snap Nets' winning streak at 14

EAST RUTHERFORD, NEW Jersey—LeBron James scored 37 points to lead Cleveland to a 108-102 victory on Saturday, ending New Jersey's 14-game NBA winning streak and leaving the Nets one win shy of a franchise record.

Vince Carter scored 33 points for New Jersey (46-29) but missed three jumpers and a foul shot in the final minute. New Jersey was trying to become the first team to win at least 15 games in a row since the Los Angeles Lakers won 19 in February-March 2000.

One game after scoring 21 fourth-quarter points in a loss to New York on Wednesday, James took over again in the final period with 18.

In other NBA matches, the Miami Heat blasted the Washington Wizards, 99-86; the Dallas Mavericks 101 overwhelmed the Hornets, 101-77; the Philadelphia Sixers downed the Bulls, 89-75; the Denver Nuggets nipped the Golden State Warriors, 95-92; and the Utah Jazz scuttled the Portland Trail Blazers, 110-93.

At Washington, Shaquille O'Neal had 27 points and 10 rebounds, Derek Anderson compensated for Dwyane Wade's foul trouble with five 3-pointers, and Miami beat its Southeast Division rival for the 16th straight time.

Wade scored 11 points in only 21 foul-plagued minutes, but he did enough to set a Miami franchise record with 76 consecutive games scoring in double digits.

At Dallas, the Mavericks followed their victory over San Antonio by beating New Orleans to draw within a half-game of the Spurs in the Western Conference.

The victory has added significance because it was against a division foe, which could become the tiebreaker if the Mavericks (58-19) and Spurs (58-18) finish with the same record.

Dirk Nowitzki had 20 points.

At Chicago, Allen Iverson scored 39 points and slumping Philadelphia beat Chicago to move into a tie for eighth place in the Eastern Conference.

At Denver, Carmelo Anthony scored 28 points and Denver clinched at least a tie for their first division title in 18 years, holding off Golden State after learning teammate Julius Hodge had been shot the night before.

Marcus Camby grabbed 17 rebounds and blocked eight shots for Denver, which can clinch the Northwest Division title with one more win or a loss by Utah.

Utah moved within 2 1/2 games of the Los Angeles Lakers and Sacramento Kings, who are tied for the final two spots in the Western Conference.

Mayweather wins after 10th rd scuffle

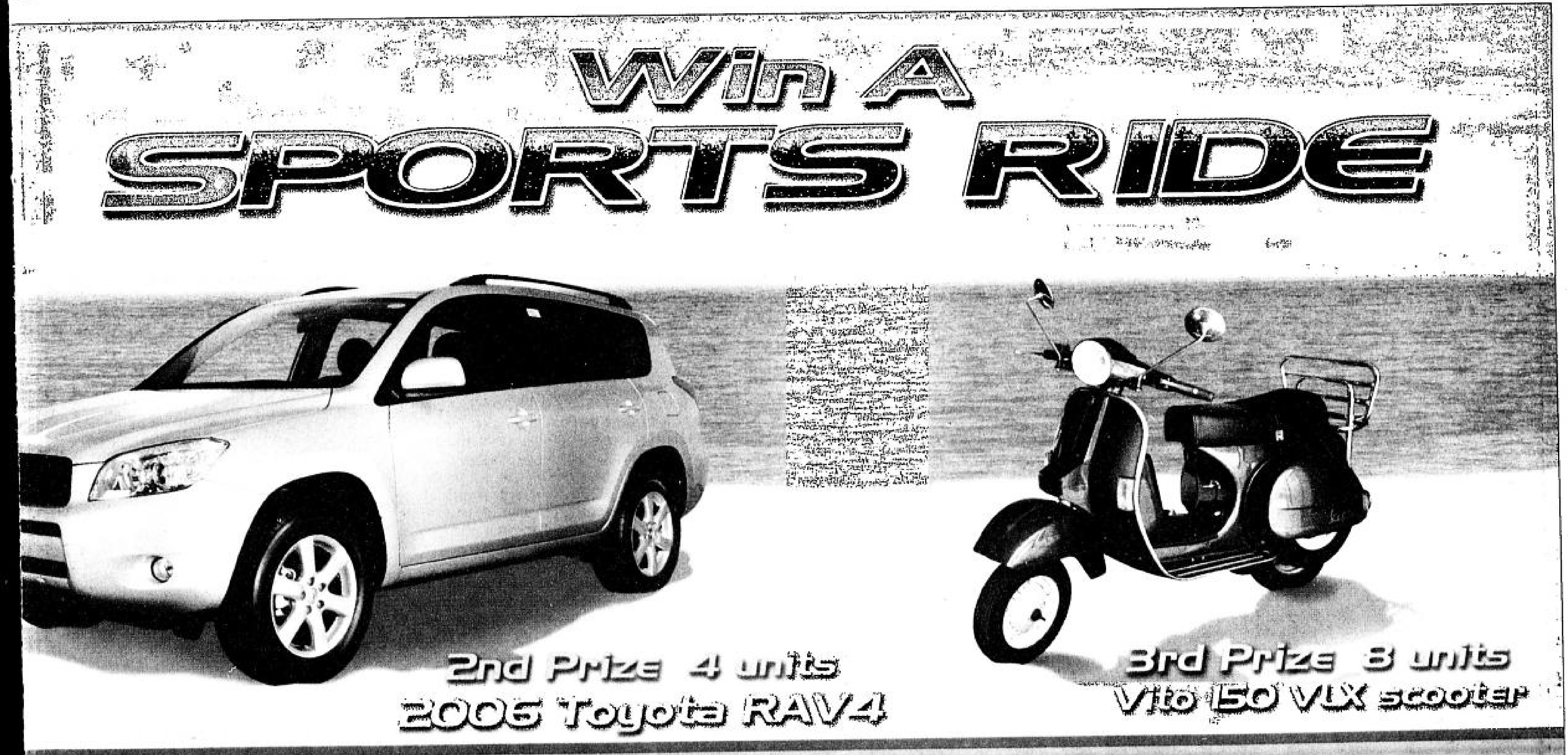
LAS VEGAS—FLOYD MAYWEATHER Jr. couldn't be beaten by the best or the worst of Zab Judah, but it could take days for regulators to unravel the nonsense that erupted in a fight within this title fight.

Mayweather claimed Judah's IBF welterweight title belt Saturday with a unanimous 12-round decision, remaining unbeaten and winning a crown in his fourth weight class, despite a 10th-round scuffle between trainers from both camps after Judah hit Mayweather with two illegal blows.

Don King, Judah's promoter, intended to protest the results and urge a disqualification for Mayweather because of the actions of his uncle and trainer, Roger Mayweather, who jumped into the ring first.

Purses were suspended.

AP



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5.) If a winning entry does not bear the name and address of the store/outlet, the entry will still be valid but no store/outlet winner will be declared for the corresponding cash prize.

6.) Promo is from April 3, 2006 to July 14, 2006. All raffle entries will be accepted only until 12 midnight of June 30, 2006. No more raffle entries shall be accepted beyond this date.

7.) Major prize winners (1st to 3rd prizes) will be drawn LIVE on July 14, 2006, to be held during the 4th game of the PBA All-Filipino Conference Finals at the Araneta Coliseum and simulcast over ABC Channel 5 at 7PM. Other prize winners (4th to 6th prizes & consolation prizes) will be pre-drawn on July 7, 2006.

8.) Only official representatives from Fortune Tobacco Corporation and DOH-BFAD will validate all winning raffle entries during the draws.

9.) All raffle prizes (1st to 6th prizes) and store/outlet winners will be published in national dailies within two (2) weeks after the grand draw date. For consolation prize winners of FTC cigarettes, a separate list will be posted at all district/branch offices of Fortune Tobacco Corporation nationwide.

10.) All prizes are tax paid, not convertible to cash, and can be redeemed within 60 days after the end of the promo period.

11.) Major prize winners will be notified by registered mail and/or by phone calls on when and where to claim their respective prizes.

12.) When claiming prizes, winners must present the registered mail and two (2) valid ID's bearing their photos and signatures. In case the claimant is unable to comply, he or she must execute an affidavit to verify and establish his or her identity.

13.) As for the store/outlet winners, they must also present the registered mail and two (2) valid IDs bearing their photos and signatures, and a copy of their business permit.

14.) Prizes not claimed sixty (60) days after the publication of the winners will be forfeited.

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Abad Santos clings to lead

MEDAL STANDINGS	G	S	B
Abad Santos	49	49	29
Binondo	43	26	20
Dapitan	41	32	28
Paco	33	24	30
Pandacan	31	30	27
Sta. Cruz	24	19	24
Sta. Ana	18	18	12
Malate	14	15	12
Ka-Maynila I	10	11	14
Ermita	9	10	12

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ABAD SANTOS PICKED UP SIX more gold medals yesterday and clung to its slim overall lead in the fifth Manila Youth Games yesterday, but the championship remains up in the air with the finals in taekwondo and late results in athletics still unaccounted for.

Bannered by athletes from Gagalangin and Tayuman, Abad Santos raised its golden haul to 49 on top of 49 silvers and 29 bronzes.

Binondo was six golds behind with 43 followed by Dapitan (41), Paco (33) and Pandacan (31).

However, Malate is expected to surge to the top when the results in taekwondo, where 60 golds are up for grabs, come in. Malate's jins represent the vaunted Central Gym, home of the national team.

Sarah Dante of Lakandula ES claimed the day's first gold for Abad Santos when she ruled the girls' 12-under long jump. Tayuman's Jester Avila captured the gold in the boys' 12-under 1,500m finals.

The AS team from District II also grabbed four of 18 gold medals at stake in badminton with Maristella Helit of KMN winning two in the girls' 15-under singles and doubles with Rechelle dela Cruz.

Irish Pascoguin of Rizal Elementary School triumphed in the girls' singles 10-under, while Vion Erick Ysulat topped the boys' 12-under.

The Dr. Alejandro Albert Elementary School bets kept Dapitan among the leaders as the defending champion in athletics amassed six of the 24 gold medals disputed.

In badminton, District VI's Kamaynila hauled seven of 15 gold medals at stake.

MANUEL Go (right) exchanges kicks with Erwin Kim Garcia in the taekwondo competition. Go won the match. RYAN LIM

La Salle stars crush Eagles

THE LA SALLE ALL-STARS RODE ON THE TORRID shooting of Johnedel Cardel and Alvin Magpantay in turning back Ateneo, 73-57, in the Total-Filoil-Flying V Homegrown Cup Friday at the San Juan gym.

Cardel had 13 points, Dwight Lago 12, and Magpantay 11 points to carry the Green Archers to their third straight victory in the tournament sponsored by Shell and Globe and supported by Sunbolt, Accel, Immuvit, Banco de Oro, Bank of Commerce, Gerry's Grill, Millenium Plans, Game Face and Inihaw Circle.

The game was close in the first quarter until Cardel caught fire, helping La Salle build a double-digit edge.

In the lone high school game, the Blue Eagles dumped La Salle-Greenhills, 62-47.

The scores:

DLSU ALL-STARS 73—Cardel 13, Lago 12, Magpantay 11, Espinosa 7, Locsin 7, Uy 5, Bautista 4, Patrimonio 4, Manguerra 3, Marquez 3, Ley 2,Perez 2, Garcia 0, Liwag 0, Saragabarria 0, Velasco 0.

ADMU ALL-STARS 57—Sison 14, Tadeo 12, Benitez 10, Tioseco M. 10, Afable 4, Quimpo 4, Narvasa O. 2, Mistades 1, Gamboa 0, Henares 0, Tioseco J. 0, Sevilla 0.

Quarters: 22-18, 36-28, 54-41, 73-57

Northern Division STANDINGS	W	L
Spring-Paranaque	2	1
Batang Tagaytay	1	1
Bacchus/Harbour	2	2
Pangasinan	1	2
Forward Taguig	0	1
Laguna-Sta.Rosa	0	2
Southern Division STANDINGS	**W**	**L**
Ozamiz Cotta	1	0
Iligan	4	1
North Cotabato	4	2
Valenica	2	1
Iloilo	0	2
Pagadian	0	2

Manila dribblers trounce Iloilo five

ILOILO CITY—BACCHUS/HARBOUR Centre-Manila waxed hot to crush the Iloilo Warriors, 86-75, Saturday night in the 2006 Guerrero Brandy-NBC national basketball championship at the University of San Agustin gym here.

Magnum Membrere, Nani Epondulan and Jayson Cuevas combined for 12 of the Manilans' 15 fourth-quarter points to ward off the Warriors' blistering rally.

The victory raised Bacchus/Harbour's record to 2-2 in the northern division.

The Manilans raced to a 15-point lead, 29-14, after 10 minutes behind Membrere and Cuevas and never looked back.

The Warriors of IBL, led by its president Snook Divinagracia and Mayor Jerry Treñas, unloaded an 8-0 bomb in the third canto behind Eldrin Senierez and came to within 65-72.

But Membrere, Epondulan and Cuevas, who combined for 59 points, sizzled again to halt the Warriors' march.

Bayron birdies 18th, tops Calatagan Open

By Musong R. Castillo

CALATAGAN, BATANGAS—NATIONAL team standout Jay Bayron closed out with a second straight one-over-par 73 yesterday to win the third Bank of Commerice Calatagan Amateur Open by a shot over Joseph Labajo and two others.

Regarded as the new national team spearhead, the 26-year-old Bayron shot three birdies against four bogeys to total 146 in the 36-hole tournament.

The winning shot was a sand wedge to three feet for birdie on the par 5 18th.

As first-day leader Jessie Balasabas faltered, Labajo, Jun Bernis and Jonel Ababa mounted a rally that fell short as they tied for second at 147.

Labajo, the winner in a three-man playoff last year, wheeled back in contention with an eagle on the 17th and a birdie No. 18 for a 73.

Bernis, the RP Amateur and DHL Open champion two years ago, shot the tournament's low round of three-under 69 while Ababa, the first National Caddies Open champion, signed for a 74.

After a 70 Saturday that gave him the first-round lead, Balasabas, a recent winner of the second NCO, ballooned to an 80 and finished alone at 150.

Rufino Bayron, Jay's younger brother, took fifth place at 148 after a 76 while club manager Tommy Manotoc matched par 72 and climbed to sixth at 149.

Meanwhile, Bing Bunye shot a day-best 78 in Class A action, ruling the division by a stroke over Domeng Molinar, who turned in an 80 for 162. Tibs Carandang fired an 83 for 168 and third spot.

Albert MG Garcia scored an 86 (173) to top Class B over Frank Juane (88).

JAY Bayron: Winner by one shot.

Tuason Centennial Cup slated at Valley

THE SEVENTH EDITION OF THE VALLEY GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB'S ANNUAL member-guest tournament has been renamed as the Don Celso Tuason Centennial Cup to commemorate the 100th birthday celebration of its prime mover and one of its founders. Presented by Smart Communications for the second straight year, the DCTCC will be staged on April 20-23 at the championship south and executive courses of Valley with a confirmed field of over 800 players vying for prizes worth over P5 million. Joey Salindong, chair of the organizing committee, has been working closely with club president Louie Reyes, sports and games director Bobon Topacio and members of the DCTCC working committees to ensure another successful member-guest annual event. Hole-in-one prizes include a Mitsubishi Lancer, Suzuki APV, Yamaha golf cart and other cash prizes with a total value of P2.5 million. Also to be given away as raffle prizes are a Yamaha golf cart, a Rolex watch, a Mizuno golf set and hybrid clubs, and household appliances. First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and his playing partner, Martha Tuason, are among the 852 registered participants. The First Gentleman is a nephew of Don Celso.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—River Bandit (6), Sense of Justice (5), Sweet Serenade (1), JJ's Friend (4)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Smooth Strike (6), Britney's Magic (3), Napa Valley (5), Mister Cool (1)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Magic Ewan Ko (3), Naman Naman/Pasurit (6), Accomplice (4), Long Road/Ocean Dignity (1)
Race 4—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)_Escapo (9), Smart Choice (7), Prime Enforcer (10), Play Maker (4), Macho Man (6), Iron Hand (11)
Race 5—(Tri)-Batang Westside (1), Striker (2), Donna Messier (5)
Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Pyramid Relaunch (7), Prince Valiant (5), Kim Possible/Dashing (1), Quant Jepuis (6), Perky Perp (4)
Race 7—(Qrt/Tri)—Plat It Again (7), Puede (6), Brute For Rent (3), Cash MC Call (5)
Race 8—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Black Squall (3), Sutter's Quest (6), Please Don't Stop (4), Money For Rap (5), Speed Admiral (2)
Race 9—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Courage Heart (9), Scarlet Velvet (4), Dulce My Love (3), Dazzling Affair (11), Bullish Dream (6), Road Runner (10).

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ENTERTAINMENT

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A girl for Lea Salonga

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

FIVE WEEKS BEFORE THE BIG DAY, the would-be first-time mom proudly relayed the news to INQUIRER Entertainment via e-mail: "It's going to be a girl. We checked at least three times just to make sure."

Although famous for her reticent ways, Lea Salonga, Filipina star of "Miss Saigon" in the West End and on Broadway, enthusiastically and generously shared this and so much more.

On previous TV interviews, she had said she was determined not to deliver by a C-section, stopping short of revealing the baby's gender.

Next month, her own little "Miss" will make a grand entrance.

Motherhood seems to have made Lea more gregarious and, as a bonus, a wee bit sentimental.

Two years ago, playing an expectant mom in Atlantis Production's staging of "Baby the Musical," Lea had sung "The Story Goes On." for the first time.

Back then, she said, the lyrics didn't resonate as powerfully with her as they do now.

"It was composed for a pregnant woman," she told INQUIRER Entertainment in December. "The last time I sang it was in Carnegie Hall (in November), with Liz Calloway, who starred in the original production. It's about a mom feeling her baby kick for the first time. It's hard not to cry with that song."

When are you due?

My due date is May 19, but the baby could arrive at any time two weeks before that. It's very exciting! We can't wait!

What are your thoughts?

The big questions on my mind are: Will I be able to take care of this little girl? Will I be a good mommy? What does God have in store for her? Am I doing enough for her now? There will always be something in me that asks those questions, [but I know] I can only do the best I can.

How are you preparing for the big day? Do you have a packed overnight bag on standby?

Nope, I don't have the bag ready yet. I've been checking baby websites to figure out exactly what I need to take to the hospital. I know that I'll need to bring a baby outfit to take her home in, hard candy, my own pajamas and slippers. I'm also going to bring my iPod, to help take my mind off the discomfort I will most assuredly be feeling, and my cellphone, to text my friends once she's born.

Do you conduct drills with your husband, mom and housemates? How often?

Oh no, we haven't done any of that. The hospital isn't far and my mother is constantly on standby. My husband has just been reminding me to eat healthy and eat light, as per my gynecologist's instructions. My mother has just been doing what a prospective grandma does: Brag about the baby… and she's not even here yet!

Have you decided on the color of the baby's room? What about the room décor?

Since we're living in a rented house at the moment, we'll be keeping the room as it is. As for room décor, we'll probably be doing more of that after she's born.

Are you having fun buying toys and shopping for baby clothes?

A lot of what I have was given as gifts from my baby registry, so we're just fine. I always visit the baby store though, to see if there's anything new.

You've said her second name would be Beverly (after your husband Rob Chien's mom); have you decided on a first name?

Yes, but because I know of people whose wonderful names were "stolen" by other people, I'm keeping our selection a secret for now.

Her second name is Beverly because we made that promise to his family when his mom died three years ago.

How much or how little weight have you gained?

As of today, I've gained close to 15 pounds. Not too bad!

What are your immediate plans after giving birth, professional and personal?

As far as my immediate plans are concerned, I would like to physically recover first before I do any concerts or shows. I want to give myself the chance to get my old body back and regain my strength for singing.

For personal plans, we'd just like to take the baby to Los Angeles, to meet family members, both on my and Rob's side. This is a very, very thrilling time!

WITH husband Robert on her 35th birthday in February.

She's counting the days for the grand entrance of her own little 'Miss'

TAKE FIVE

DURING the same party, with friends, Agot Isidro, Chari Arespacochaga and Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo, all in the "Baby" team.

RP, Malaysia to co-produce drama series

By Marinel R. Cruz

GMA NETWORK INC. HAS TIED UP WITH A Malaysian TV outfit to co-produce one season of the drama anthology, "Now and Forever," according to a *Kapuso* network executive.

The drama series will star two lead actors from Malaysia and another two from the Philippines, and will be shot in both countries, said "Now and Forever" program manager Cheryl Sy.

"We cannot disclose the name of the Malaysian company just yet," Sy told INQUIRER Entertainment on Saturday. "I can say the two companies will split the expenses, but 80 percent of the creative team will be Filipino."

She added that the show will be aired on a government-owned Malaysian station as well as on GMA 7.

Sy said the contract between the two companies was signed in January, but preproduction began late last year. "The filming begins in June," she said.

Meanwhile, the fifth season of "Now and Forever" starts airing on April 17, with a series titled, "Duyan." Mac Alejandre directs. *(Interview with Glydel Mercado on A2-8)*

Deal with Korea

Sy said the Malaysian company contacted GMA 7 senior vice president for TV Entertainment Wilma Galvante and expressed its interest in the co-production. Then a representative flew in to discuss the details with Galvante.

GMA 7 earlier inked a deal with a Korean-based independent outfit to co-produce another soap series to be filmed here and aired in four Asian countries, network president Felipe L. Gozon told INQUIRER Entertainment in a previous interview.

In 2005, the network sold rights to air the hit fantaserye "Mulawin" to Indonesian and Cambodian TV firms.

"Mulawin" was dubbed in Bahasa and is now being aired on Indonesia's TV 7. Dubbed in Khmer, it was aired in Cambodia in September, assistant vice president for syndication Darlene Dimaano said.

"We're going global," Gozon said. "We should no longer isolate ourselves. All other Asian countries are doing [co-prods]."

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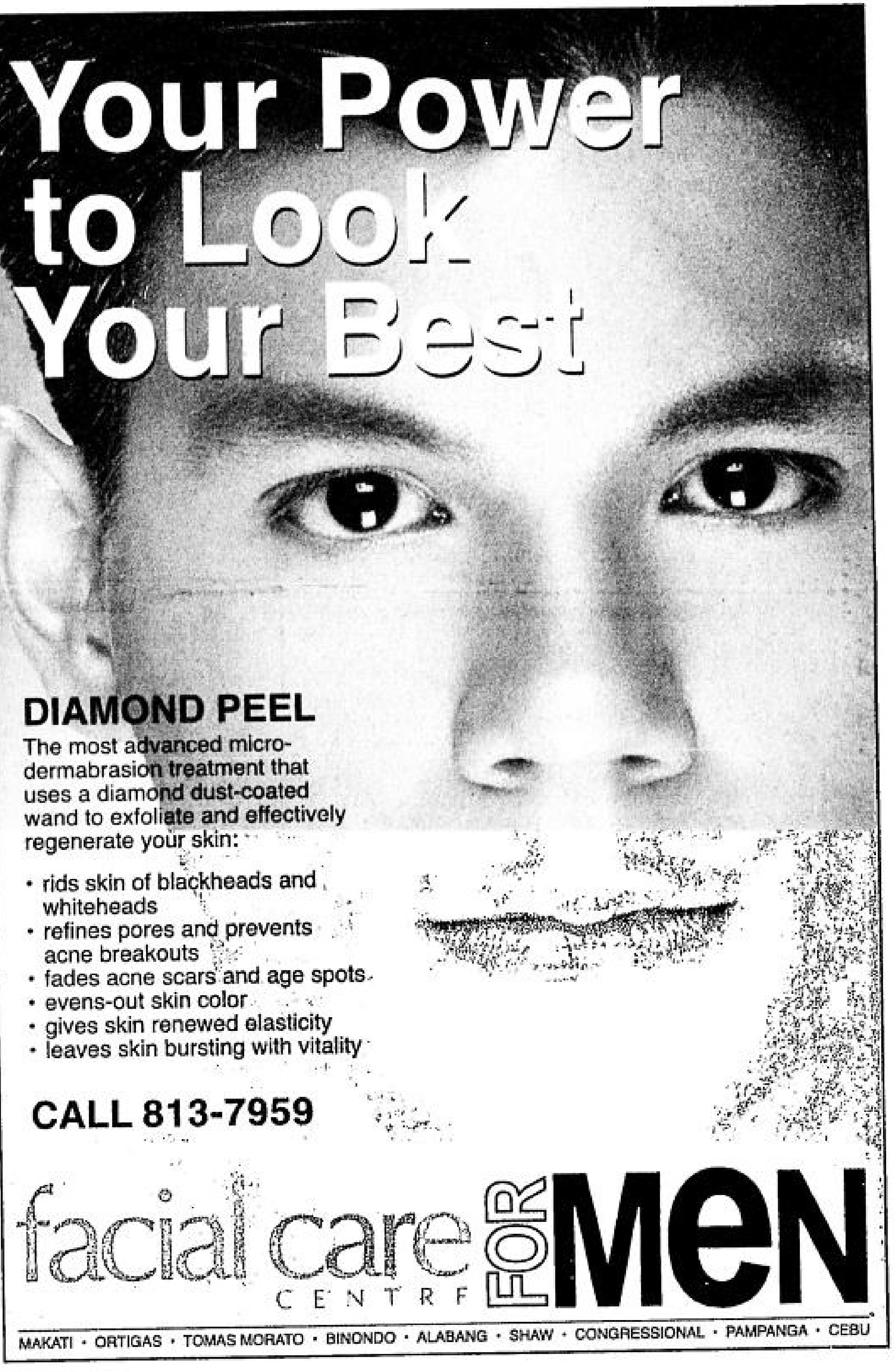
Iza Calzado (Apr. 9) Pido Acoustic Show (Apr. 22) Kolma Haih (Apr. 23) Metropolis Alabang
River Maya (Apr. 7) Center For Pop (Apr. 23) Kamikazee (Apr. 22) Starmall Edsa.



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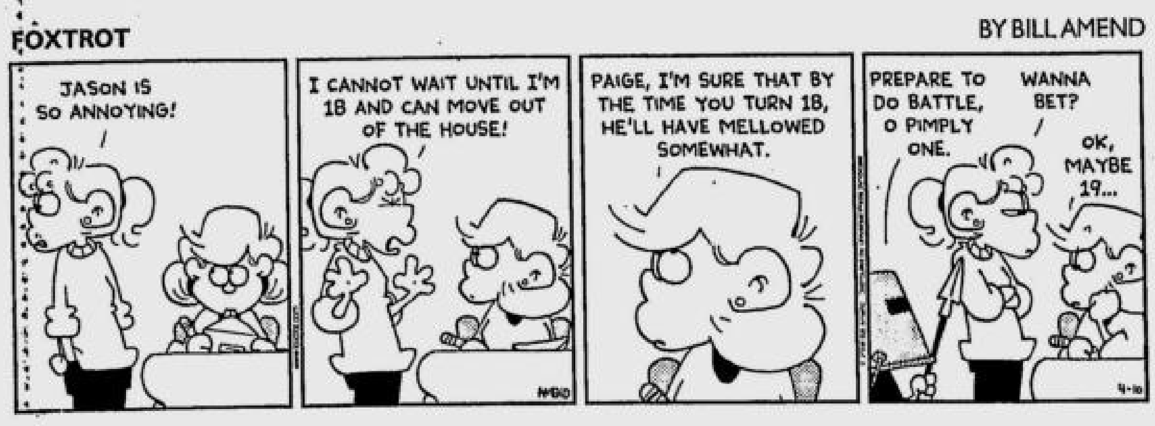
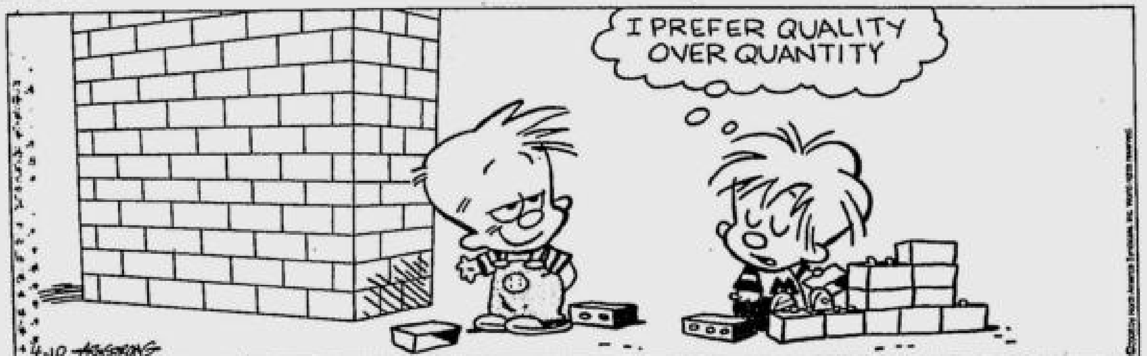
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


JASON IS SO ANNOYING!
I CANNOT WAIT UNTIL I'M 18 AND CAN MOVE OUT OF THE HOUSE!
PAIGE, I'M SURE THAT BY THE TIME YOU TURN 18, HE'LL HAVE MELLOWED SOMEWHAT.
PREPARE TO DO BATTLE, O PIMPLY ONE.
WANNA BET?
OK, MAYBE 19...
4-10

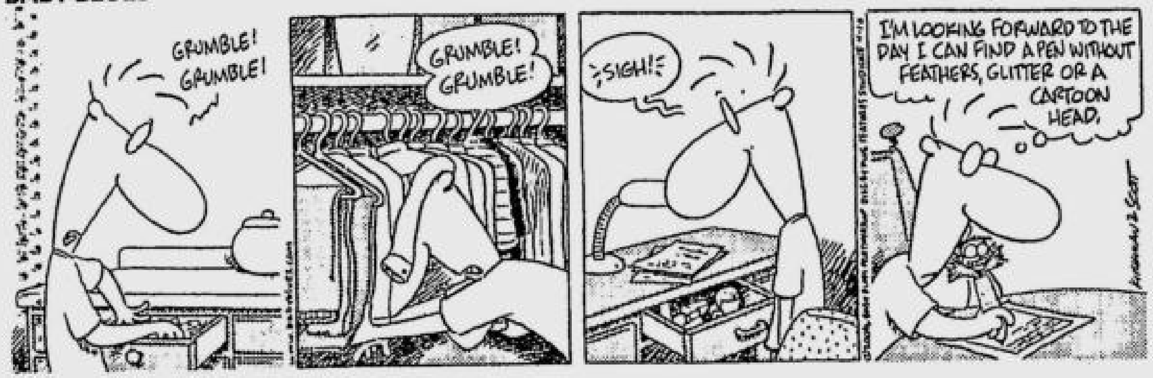
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I PREFER QUALITY OVER QUANTITY
4-10 ARMSTRONG

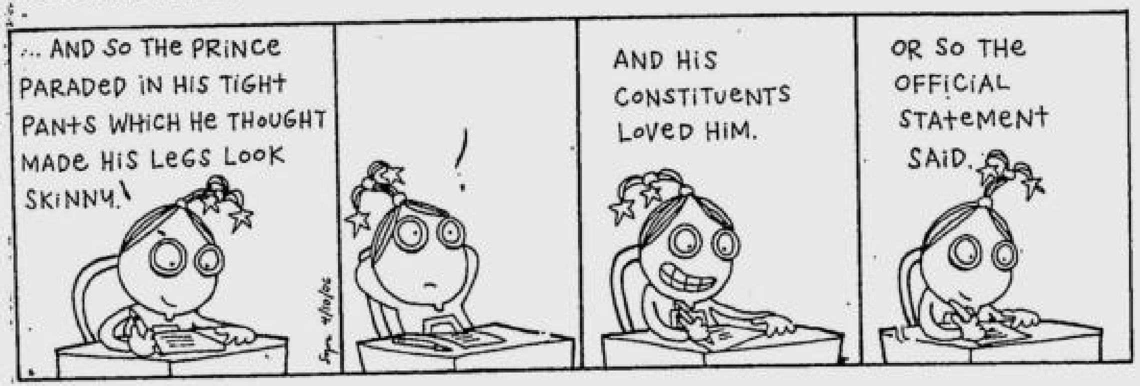
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


GRUMBLE! GRUMBLE!
GRUMBLE! GRUMBLE!
SIGH!
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DAY I CAN FIND A PEN WITHOUT FEATHERS, GLITTER OR A CARTOON HEAD.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


... AND SO THE PRINCE PARADED IN HIS TIGHT PANTS WHICH HE THOUGHT MADE HIS LEGS LOOK SKINNY.
AND HIS CONSTITUENTS LOVED HIM.
OR SO THE OFFICIAL STATEMENT SAID.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have backbone. No one can accuse you of not having courage or not being able to stand your ground. You have confidence in yourself. Your independence is vital. You get involved, but you need to remain detached. You're a careful risk-taker. Work hard in the year ahead. Build and construct something important. Your payoff will come very soon.

Birthdate of: Steven Seagal, actor; Mandy Moore, actress/singer; Harry Morgan, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You can get a lot done today because the resources of others are there for you. Whether it is machinery, equipment, funding or staff, you have what you need to do the job.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is quite a productive day for you because the Moon is in your fellow Earth sign, making a lovely aspect to lucky Jupiter. You feel encouraged about romance, the arts and matters related to children.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Your focus is on home, family and real estate today. You see a way to make improvements that could bring you increased profits.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): A busy day! Your positive attitude makes all the difference right now. Others, especially children, welcome your witty humor and ability to entertain!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Your focus is on money and possessions today. You might be able to do something to promote real estate and your family holdings.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): The Moon is in your sign today, bringing you a bit of extra good luck. However, it also makes you more emotional about everything going on around you.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You need quiet time to just think and rest today. Give this to yourself. You can't be all things to all people all the time. Who can?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): A female friend can be helpful to you today. This person could provide a sympathetic ear or a shoulder for you to cry on.

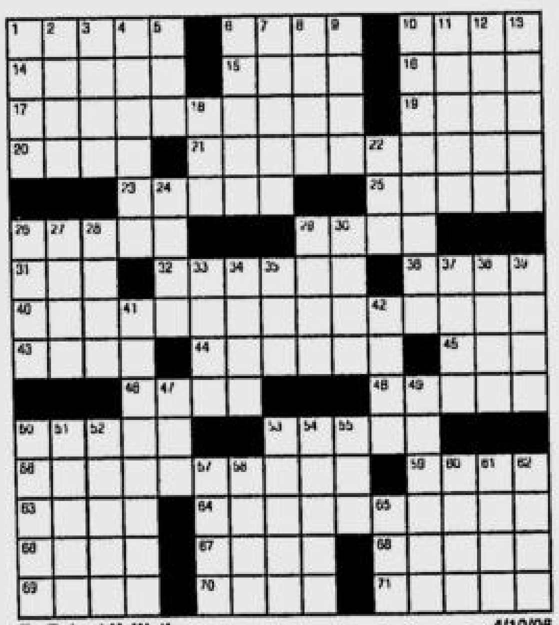
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Whatever you do today, you'll be in the public eye, no matter how briefly. People notice you! Bosses, VIPs and parents play a significant role in your life today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You need a break from your daily routine. You would rather be anywhere but here. That's because you're hungry for adventure, and you're also keen to learn something new.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Work with the resources of others to accomplish what you need to do today. Find out if partners can help you now. Take care of red-tape details like insurance, bills, debt and taxes.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Today's Moon opposes your sign. Therefore, conversations with partners and close friends are significant. Listen carefully to what others have to say.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Robert H. Wolfe
North Woodmere, NY
4/10/06

ACROSS
1 Ring of plotters
6 "Fernando" group
10 Thunder sound
14 Speak pompously
15 See fit
16 Ear part
17 Actor Clift
19 Culture medium
20 Perimeter
21 Pebble, by definition
23 ERAs, e.g.
25 Skating arenas
26 Epsilon preceder
29 Reach across
31 "Norma __"
32 Secondhand purchase
36 Morales of "Bad Boys"
40 What 17A, 21A, 56A & 64A are
43 Apportion (out)
44 Balance on the brink
45 Talk foolishly
46 Lustful look
48 Unkempt
50 Singer Merman
53 The Evil One
56 Prudent management
59 1916 art sensation
63 California valley
64 Lively dance
66 Wallet items
67 Make well
68 Enticed
69 Stick in the mud
70 March 15th, e.g.
71 Rigging supports

DOWN
1 __ off it!
2 Yanks 3rd baseman
3 Slam loudly
4 Bear witness
5 Tour segment
6 Allow in
7 Borscht ingredient
8 Ernie's buddy
9 __ nitrate
10 Reed instrument
11 Link up with the Internet
12 One way to be taken?
13 Fringe benefits
18 Cup or pay attachment?
22 Period
24 Skater Lipinski
26 Bongo or conga
27 Facility
28 For fear that
29 Thin strip
30 First name in cartoon skunks
33 Major ending?
34 Visionary
35 King topper
37 Puts into words
38 Regrettably
39 Culp/Cosby show
41 Air
42 Rombauer of cookbook fame
47 Actor Wallach
49 Turns out
50 Type of sails
51 Singer Lopez
52 Greek writer
53 Trap
54 Farmland units
55 Rolodex info
57 701
58 Barak of Israel
60 Gillette razor
61 One who acts
62 No ifs, __ or buts
65 Golfer Ernie

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

T	A	P		B	A	R	B	A	R	A		S	A	W
H	U	E		O	R	D	E	R	E	D		A	P	E
E	R	R		N	A	S	T	I	E	R		G	O	B
E	A	T	I	N				A	N	I	M	I	S	T
A	L	A	N		E	N	D		L	E	A	N	T	O
S	L	I	T		M	O	O		I	N	H	A	L	E
T	Y	N	E		E	S	P		G	N	A	W	E	D
			S	C	R	E	E	C	H	E	R			
A	G	A	T	H	A		O	A	T		I	S	N	T
M	A	R	I	E	L		U	S	E		S	T	A	R
P	L	A	N	E	D		T	E	N		H	A	T	E
L	I	B	E	R	I	A				P	I	N	T	A
E	L	I		I	S	R	A	E	L	I		L	I	D
S	E	A		E	L	M	T	R	E	E		E	L	L
T	O	N		R	E	S	E	A	T	S		E	Y	E

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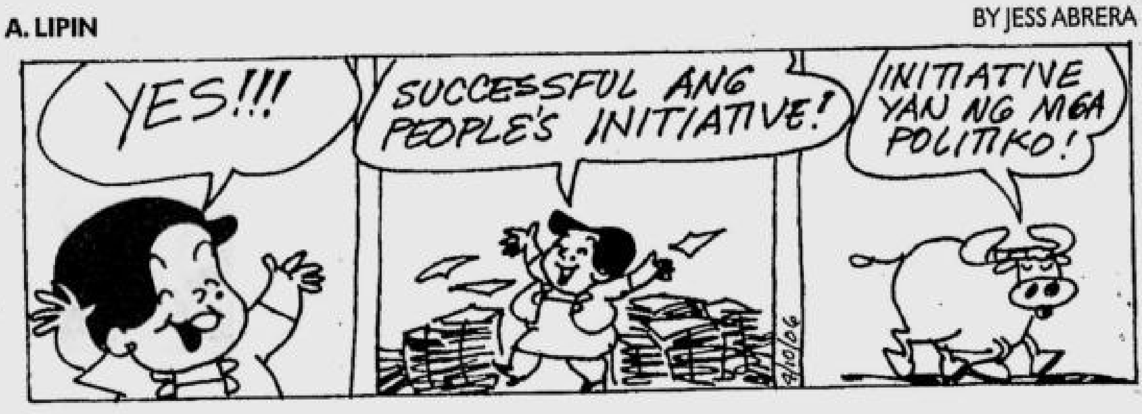
4/10/06

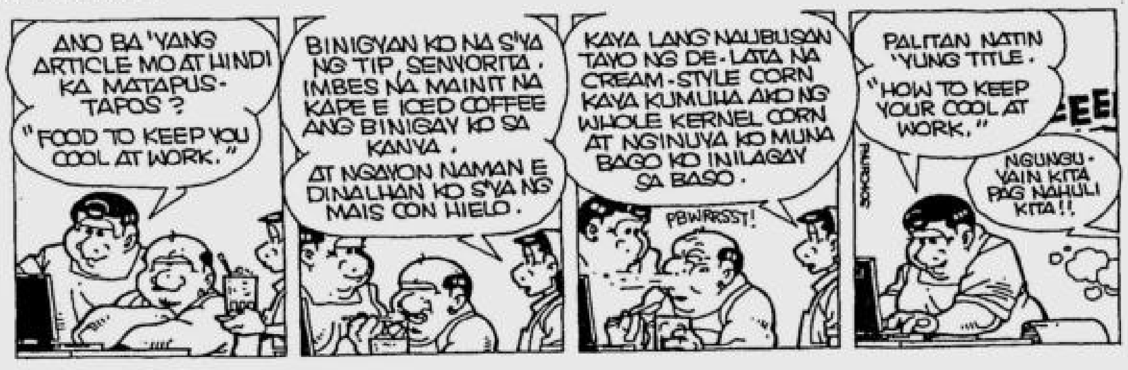
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


YES!!!
SUCCESSFUL ANG PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE!
INITIATIVE YAN NG MGA POLITIKO!
4/10/06

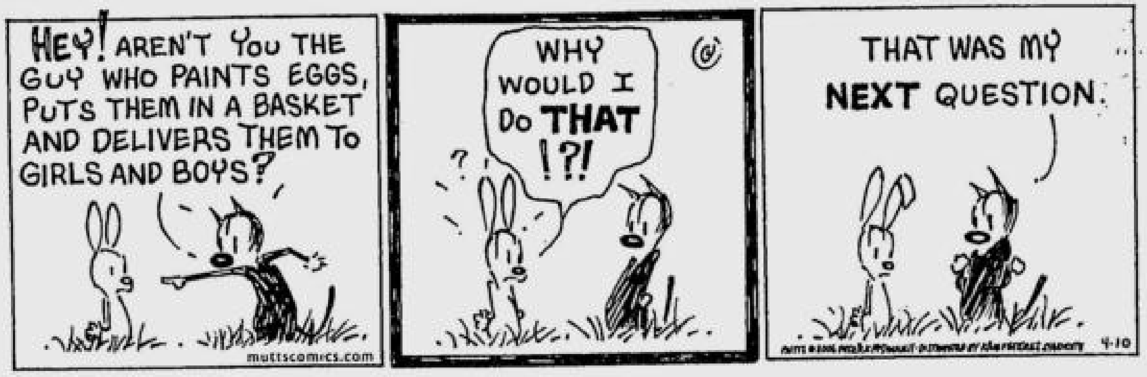
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANO BA 'YANG ARTICLE MO AT HINDI KA MATAPUS-TAPOS? "FOOD TO KEEP YOU COOL AT WORK."
BINIGYAN KO NA S'YA NG TIP, SENYORITA. IMBES NA MAINIT NA KAPE E ICED COFFEE ANG BINIGAY KO SA KANYA. AT NGAYON NAMAN E DINALHAN KO S'YA NG MAIS CON HIELO.
KAYA LANG NAUBUSAN TAYO NG DE-LATA NA CREAM-STYLE CORN KAYA KUMUHA AKO NG WHOLE KERNEL CORN AT NGINUYA KO MUNA BAGO KO INILAGAY SA BASO.
PBWRRSST!
PALITAN NATIN 'YUNG TITLE. "HOW TO KEEP YOUR COOL AT WORK."
EEE!
NGUNGUYAIN KITA PAG NAHULI KITA!!

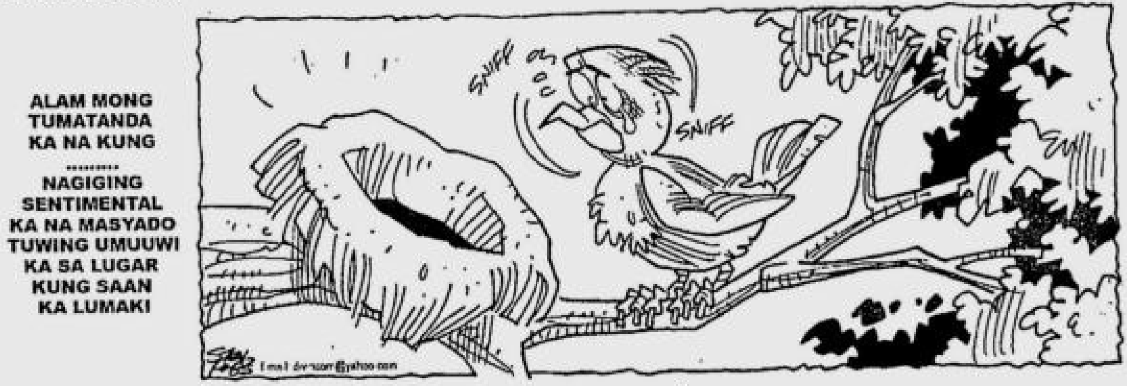
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


HEY! AREN'T YOU THE GUY WHO PAINTS EGGS, PUTS THEM IN A BASKET AND DELIVERS THEM TO GIRLS AND BOYS?
WHY WOULD I DO THAT !?!
THAT WAS MY NEXT QUESTION.
muttscomics.com
4-10

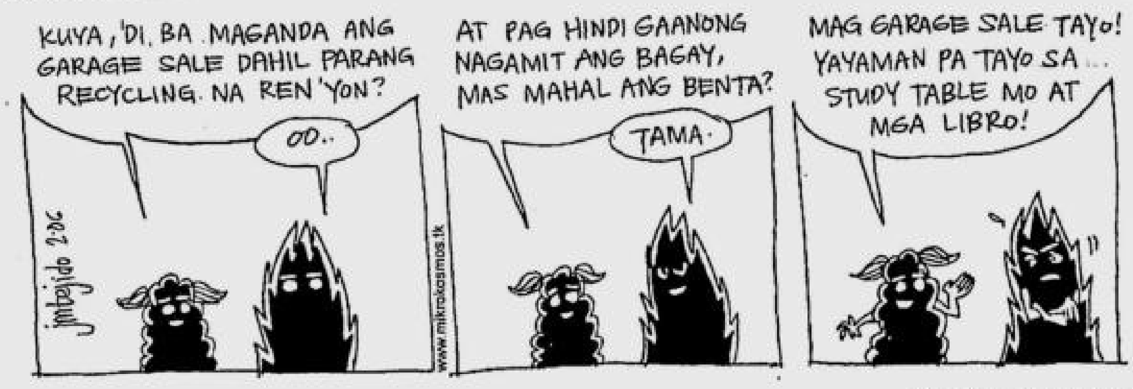
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ALAM MONG TUMATANDA KA NA KUNG
....
NAGIGING SENTIMENTAL KA NA MASYADO TUWING UMUUWI KA SA LUGAR KUNG SAAN KA LUMAKI
SNIFF
SNIFF

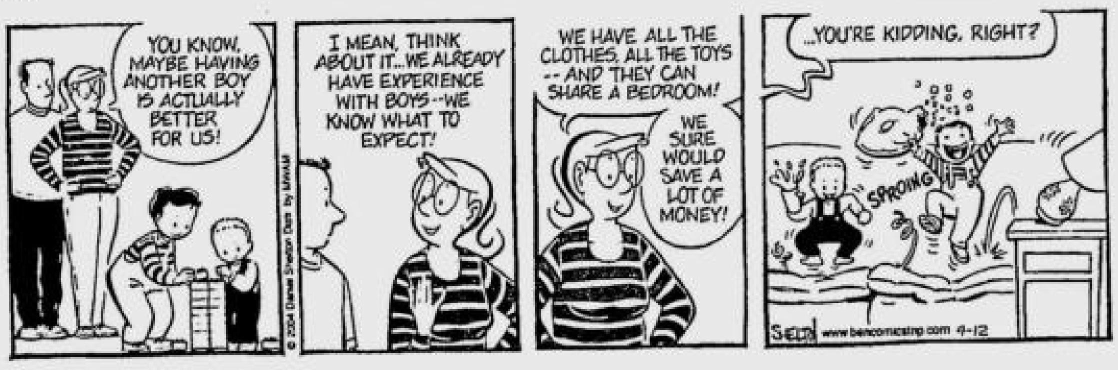
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


KUYA, 'DI BA MAGANDA ANG GARAGE SALE DAHIL PARANG RECYCLING NA REN 'YON?
OO..
AT PAG HINDI GAANONG NAGAMIT ANG BAGAY, MAS MAHAL ANG BENTA?
TAMA.
MAG GARAGE SALE TAYO! YAYAMAN PA TAYO SA... STUDY TABLE MO AT MGA LIBRO!
www.mikrokosmos.tk

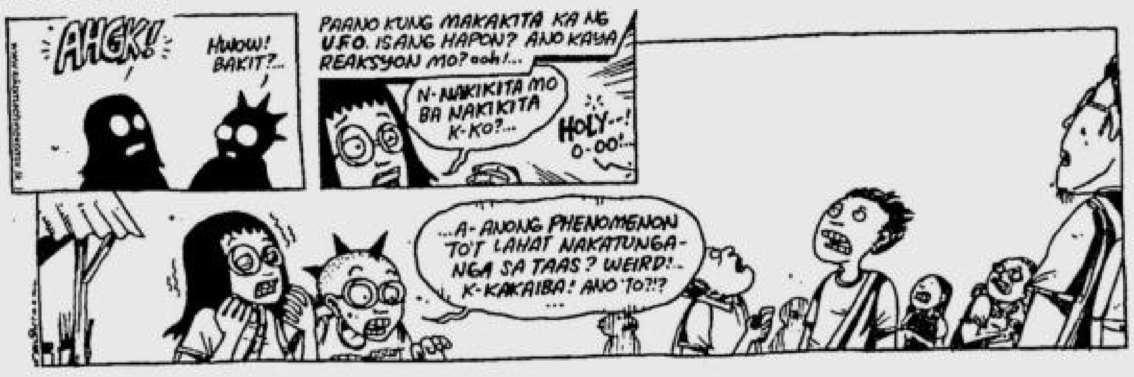
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU KNOW, MAYBE HAVING ANOTHER BOY IS ACTUALLY BETTER FOR US!
I MEAN, THINK ABOUT IT... WE ALREADY HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH BOYS -- WE KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT!
WE HAVE ALL THE CLOTHES, ALL THE TOYS -- AND THEY CAN SHARE A BEDROOM!
WE SURE WOULD SAVE A LOT OF MONEY!
...YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
SPROING
www.bencomicstrip.com 4-12

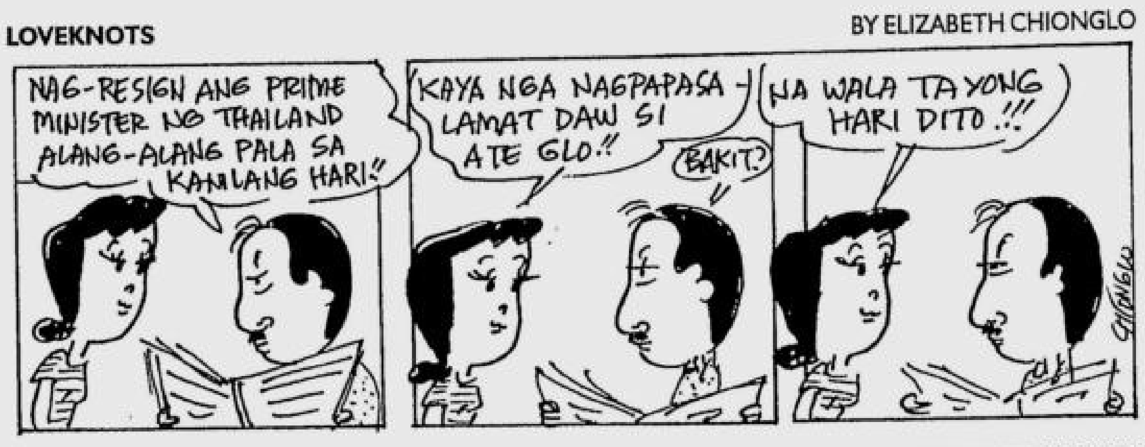
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


AHGK!
HWOW! BAKIT?..
PAANO KUNG MAKAKITA KA NG U.F.O. ISANG HAPON? ANO KAYA REAKSYON MO? ooh!...
N-NAKIKITA MO BA NAKIKITA K-KO?...
HOLY--! O-OO!..
...A-ANONG PHENOMENON TO'T LAHAT NAKATUNGANGA SA TAAS? WEIRD!.. K-KAKAIBA! ANO 'TO?!?

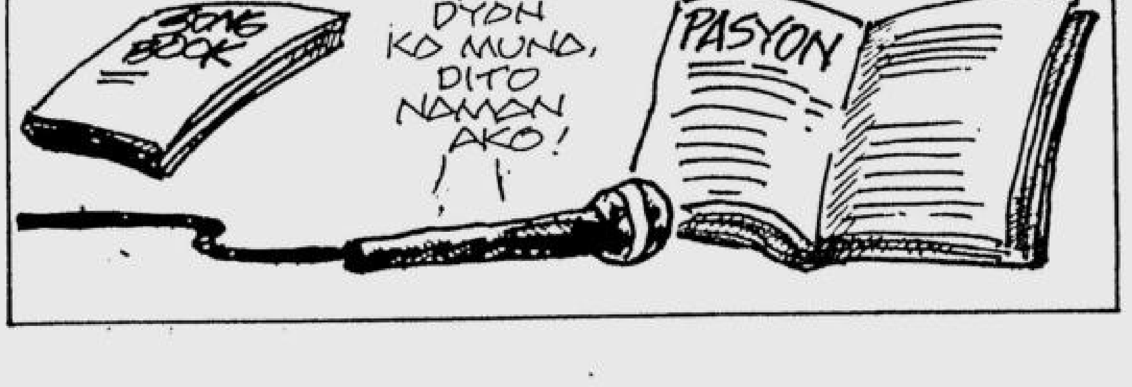
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NAG-RESIGN ANG PRIME MINISTER NG THAILAND ALANG-ALANG PALA SA KANILANG HARI!
KAYA NGA NAGPAPASALAMAT DAW SI ATE GLO!!
BAKIT?
NA WALA TAYONG HARI DITO!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SONG BOOK
D'YON KO MUNA, DITO NAMAN AKO!
PASYON

THIS dog saves the day in "The Hills Have Eyes."

No thinking required

REVIEW

NEW YORK—YOU COULD LOOK AT "THE Hills Have Eyes" as a political statement, a revenge piece in which a Republican family is brutalized by a pack of mutant cannibals, the offspring of miners exposed to government atomic weapons testing in the desert.

But that would entail using your brain. And after sitting through this remake of the 1977 cult favorite, you won't feel like using your brain for much of anything.

Road trip

Horror fans who like their movies gory should be satisfied with French director Alexandre Aja's interpretation of the Wes Craven classic. (Craven himself was apparently pleased—he's one of the producers). Everyone else will feel as if they, too, have taken an ax to the head. Then again, they're not the target audience—and the target audience doesn't read reviews anyway.

Retired police detective "Big Bob" Carter (Ted Levine) and wife Ethel (Kathleen Quinlan) are on a road trip from Cleveland to San Diego for their wedding anniversary. They've packed up the SUV and towed along an old Airstream trailer to accommodate all their kids: teenagers Bobby (Dan Byrd) and Brenda (Emilie De Ravin), oldest daughter Lynn (Vinessa Shaw), her husband Doug (Aaron Stanford) and their infant daughter.

Big Bob doesn't approve of Doug because he's a scrawny, passive cell-phone salesman—and worse, a Democrat.

The family's German shepherds, Beauty and Beast, are along for the ride and ultimately play a crucial role in the possibility of anyone's survival. No one ever asked Rin Tin Tin to do the things required of these dogs.

Dad pulls over at a gas station in the middle of nowhere—the last stop for 200 miles, inhabited only by a creepy, haggard attendant (Tom Bower) who fills up the tank and suggests a short cut. Through the hills.

Miles away from the highway and any signs of civilization, they naturally have a well-orchestrated accident.

Aja and Levasseur were good enough to deliver characters who feel like actual human beings. Byrd and Stanford are especially good.

All the while, the family is being watched by people who barely resemble human beings. These misshapen misfits are more like redneck Picasso figures. They take out the Carters one by one in sadistic ways that are often disturbing to watch. Then again, the point of the genre is to disturb, so in that sense Aja has succeeded.

All that blood

He has at his disposal the benefit of CGI to create visual effects that were lacking in Craven's low-budget original. He holds nothing back. You see the beatings, the shootings, the stabbings, and every drop of blood. You see a character tied up and burned, and another whose heart has been ripped out just in time for dinner.

Clearly, Aja isn't interested in the idea that it's what you don't show that's more frightening.

Christy Lemire, AP

Can older 'Idol' singers make it?

LOS ANGELES—WHEN "AMERICAN IDOL" contestant Taylor Hicks belted out Stevie Wonder's golden oldie "Living for the City" there was scant age difference between the singer and the 32-year-old song.

Hicks, 29, and other "Idol" finalists edging near 30 are testing the limits of just how old an aspiring pop star can be and still gain acceptance from the music industry and the public—while the TV contest reaps the rewards of showcasing older performers.

The top-rated Fox show is attracting a bigger audience than ever in its fifth edition as it offers a wider range of talent, which producers say is why they raised the audition age limit from 24 to 28 last year.

The change opened the door for half of the dozen finalists: Besides Hicks, who turned 29 after making the cut, there's Mandisa, also 29; Bucky Covington, 28; Chris Daughtry, 26; Elliott Yamin, 27, and Ace Young, 25 (Mandisa was booted last week).

"There's a lot of really good singers we were turning down because of the age limit, and we realized it was silly," said executive producer Ken Warwick. "You're certainly not over the hill by 28."

Age-inclusive

It's certainly true, though, that young consumers and the artists they favor dominate the music marketplace to an extent that makes TV look relatively age-inclusive.

"When you talk to guys in the record industry you do hear a lot of, 'Wow, she's 30, she's 35,' as if that completely ends any discussion," said Sean Ross, editor of Edison Media Research, which conducts research for radio stations. "In fact, You see a lot of artists who aren't that old who have lost their own deals and go to work writing for Avril Lavigne and Kelly Clarkson."

Rocker Sheryl Crow, 44, has had to "fight for her place" in radio for the last five years, Ross added. After Janet Jackson bared her breast at the 2004 Super Bowl football championship, "it was discussed as a pathetic attempt to stay relevant" by the now 39-year-old singer, Ross said.

"It's certainly more difficult as you become older," said TVT Records founder Steve Gottlieb. "But every success is an exception to the rule."

Noted said Steve Stoute, whose company, Translations Marketing, links music stars with commercial products: "If you're talented and representing who you are, there's an audience for you."

Lynn Elber, AP

EVA Longoria: Best shot

Douglas 'wasn't ready' for Eva

"SHE'S A CRACKSHOT," MICHAEL DOUGLAS says of his "The Sentinel" co-star Eva Longoria. "I wasn't ready for how good she was. They told us that she's better than 90 percent of the police officers out there. She's quite the athlete."

Deviating from her role as Gabrielle Solis in the hit TV series "Desperate Housewives," Eva proves that she's much more than a man in the upcoming political thriller.

In the movie, she plays Jill Marin, a tough, sassy and ambitious young agent. She has just graduated second in her class at the Secret Service Academy, and arrives for her first field posting. Together, Marin, Pete Garrison (Douglas) and David Breckinridge (Kiefer Sutherland), uncover what appears to be an inside job to assassinate the US president.

"I chose this movie because Jill is the opposite of Gabrielle," Eva says. "It's a triangle between Michael, Kiefer and me, but not a love triangle." This time around, she adds, "It's not about the clothes, the hair or makeup. Jill Marin is about the work."

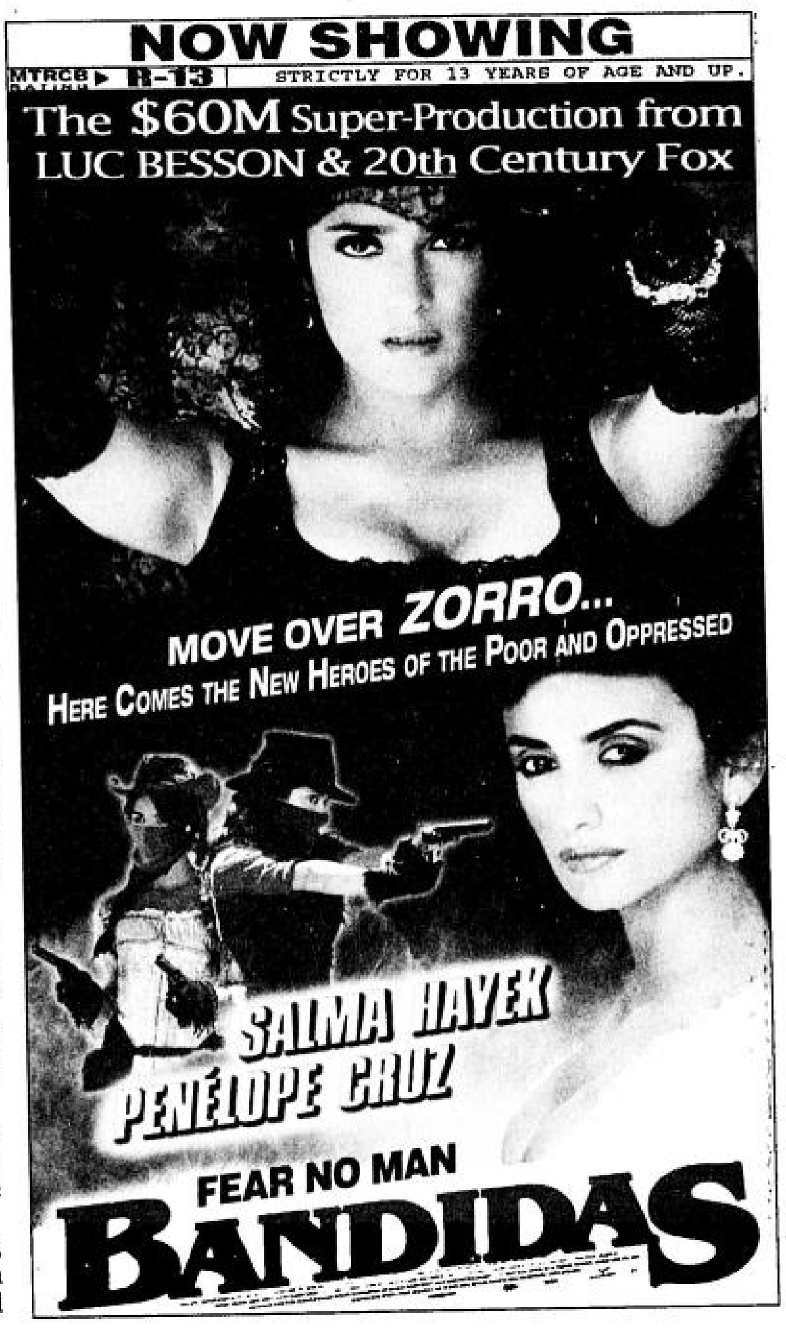
It's not about size, either. Eva says her slight build was not a liability. "I felt comfortable amid all the testosterone because I'm a tomboy. I grew up on a ranch and used to go target-shooting with my dad. I shot my first gun when I was six!"

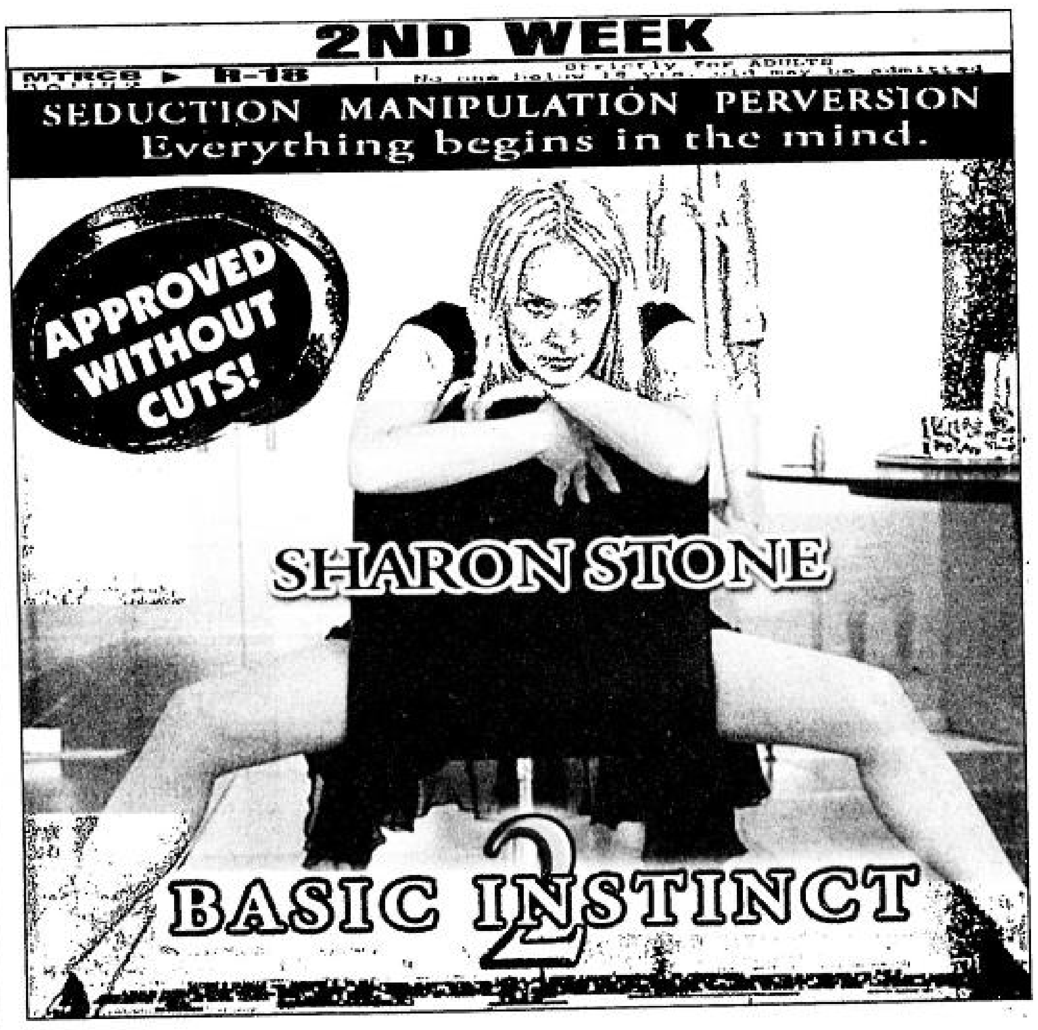
For "Sentinel," Eva asked the Secret Service advisors a lot of questions. "I have newfound respect for these people and what they do for the country," she says.

Indeed, Eva was the best shot among the cast members. One of the advisors explained: "She has no bad habits. She listens very well and was able to translate that into the correct posture, trigger-pull, site-picture alignment and physical requirements required for hitting the target. She was exceptional."

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City
For inquiries, call:
687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1 THE HILLS HAVE EYES 1:05, 3:35, 6:05 R-18 | TRISTAN & ISOLDE 8:25, 11:05 R-13
2 ICE AGE 2 12:20, 2:50, 5:20, 7:50, 10:30 GP
3 BASIC INSTINCT 2 12:30, 3:10, 5:50 R-18 | EIGHT BELOW 8:30, 11:00 GP
4 BANDIDAS 1:10, 3:30, 5:50, 8:10, 10:30 R-13


NOW SHOWING
MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND UP.
The $60M Super-Production from LUC BESSON & 20th Century Fox
MOVE OVER ZORRO...
HERE COMES THE NEW HEROES OF THE POOR AND OPPRESSED
SALMA HAYEK
PENÉLOPE CRUZ
FEAR NO MAN
BANDIDAS


2ND WEEK
MTRCB RATING ▶ R-18 Strictly for ADULTS No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted
SEDUCTION MANIPULATION PERVERSION
Everything begins in the mind.
APPROVED WITHOUT CUTS!
SHARON STONE
BASIC INSTINCT 2

HOLLYWOOD'S FIRST BIG SUMMER MOVIE FOR 2006
We've been expecting you
COMING SOON
SILENT HILL
Based on the #1 survival game from KONAMI

ARANETA CENTER
Gateway AliMALL FarmersPlaza
THE ONLY CINEPLEX IN THE COUNTRY
Gateway Cineplex*10
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

EIGHT BELOW 2:00 / 4:30 / 7:00 / 9:30
GRANDMA'S BOY 7:10 / 9:30 BASIC INSTINCT 2 1:50 / 4:30 / 7:10 / 9:50
TRISTAN & ISOLDE 1:50 / 4:30 / 7:10 / 9:50
GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA TRISTAN & ISOLDE 1:00 / 3:40 / 6:20 / 9:00
NANNY McPHEE 12:20 / 2:30 / 4:40
BANDIDAS 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
ICE AGE 2 12:40 / 2:50 / 5:00 / 7:10 / 9:20
MOMENTS OF LOVE 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50
SHE'S THE MAN 2:00 / 4:20 JUST FRIENDS 6:50 / 9:00
THE HILLS HAVE EYES 12:00 / 2:20 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
ONLY P120 ADMISSION GLOBE PLATINUM P249 P299

AliMALL CINEMAS
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE 12:00 R3 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40
2 ICE AGE 2 12:15 R4 / 1:25 / 3:35 / 5:45 / 7:55
3 BANDIDAS 12:15 R3 / 1:45 / 4:05 / 6:25 / 8:45
4 BASIC INSTINCT 2 12:30 / 3:10 / 5:50 / 8:30
5 THE HILLS HAVE EYES 12:55 / 3:15 / 5:35 / 8:05
DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS
For ticket inquiries, please call TicketNet at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

ARANETA COLISEUM
PBA PHILIPPINE CUP
Apr 16, 4:10 RED BULL vs ALASKA
Sun. 6:30 TALK N TEXT vs AIR 21
SANTANA ROOTS... GREG ROLIE LIVE!
APRIL 28, Friday 8 pm

Sundays on A
a celebration of

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

We hope 'Dance Fever' helps raise the bar for 'Shall We Dance?'

SUNDAY NIGHT TV IS A CE
least for viewers of ABC-5,
dance shows to enjoy.

"Shall We Dance?," hosted
celebrities turned dancers wh
sional ballroom dance expon
plum each month.

On April 2, the surviving
Mystica, Wowee de Guzman
all worked hard on their com
fact, that the show's residen
three teams for the monthly fi

We were particularly imp
mance, which was characteri
sion and flourish. It reminded
teen actor, **Wowee** cut his perf
dance group.

Now that he isn't as busy as
tor, **Wowee** should give his da
that good on the dance floor!

For her part, **Mystica** has w
show because it's encouraged
cially sexy dancing style of ol
ing on the program, and loo
herself.

Eager to encourage her to
lightened direction in her ca
support **Mystica**'s effort to tr
Dance?"

While the local dance com
however, it's roundly upstag
Fever," that immediately follo

Instead of fielding celebri
auditions "unknown" dancers
transforms them into veritabl

There's so much talent aro
dance groups who make it to
ceptional performers. Thus,
work cut out for them in choo
ready outstanding field.

Now do American dancers
take lessons from the time th
more opportunities to perfor
tential income is higher.

These factors encourage th
veloping themselves into star
performances on "Dance Feve

We hope that "Dance Fever
terpsichorean standard on "
will have an even better time
Sundays on ABC-5.

'Oprah Prime Time'

Star World telecasts "Opra
8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. Last
first TV interview in two yea
opened up about her new lov
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TRAPPED BEHIND ENEMY LINES.
A WAR FOUGHT WITHOUT RULES.
CURTIS MORGAN
ZAN CALABRETTA
JORDAN BROWN
EDDIE DELLA SIEPE

MTRCB R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE

OPENS APRIL 15

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NOW, WITNESS THE DEVASTATING IRAQ WAR
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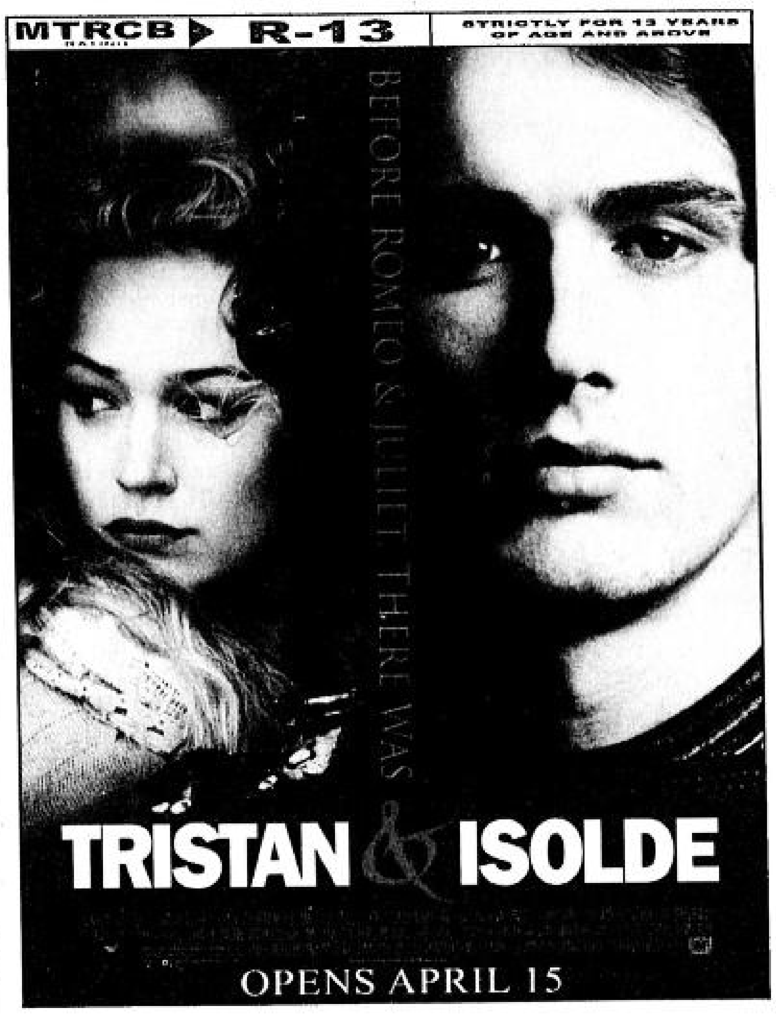
AMERICAN SOLDIERS
DATELINE: IRAQ

THE FIRST HOLLYWOOD WAR FILM SHOT IN IRAQ


BEFORE ROMEO & JULIET THERE WAS
TRISTAN & ISOLDE

MTRCB R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE

OPENS APRIL 15

MTRCB G ALL AGES ARE ADMITTED
THE MOST AMAZING STORY OF SURVIVAL, FRIENDSHIP, AND ADVENTURE EVER TOLD.
WALT DISNEY
PAUL WALKER
EIGHT BELOW
INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY
Distributed by Buena Vista International thru Columbia Pictures

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novaliches • pioneer • imus • lipa
sta. rosa • dasmariñas • angeles
starmills, pampanga • bacolod
and iloilo

APRIL 10 to 12
OPENS on APRIL 15

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MOVIEWORLD

glorietta GREENBELT ALABANG TOWN CENTER AYALA CENTER CEBU MARKET! MARKET! Ayala Malls Love malls!

AT THE CINEMAS

THX

Reserve your tickets by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.
Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification, please call 729 7777

G1	GLORIETTA 1	1 THE HILLS HAVE EYES	2 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	3 CHINESE TALL STORY	4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
G4	GLORIETTA 4	1 THE HILLS HAVE EYES	2 GRANDMA'S BOY	3 THX BANDIDAS 12:05, 2:10, 4:15, 7:20, 8:25, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
		4 BASIC INSTINCT 2	5 MOMENTS OF LOVE	6 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	7 JUST FRIENDS
GB1	GREENBELT 1	1 THE HILLS HAVE EYES	2 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN		
GB3	GREENBELT 3	1 THX BANDIDAS 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:25, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
		3 RENT 1:15, 3:45, 6:15, 8:45, 11:15 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 JUST FRIENDS 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 THE HILLS HAVE EYES 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	2 BANDIDAS		
		3 THE HILLS HAVE EYES	4 GRANDMA'S BOY	5 JUST FRIENDS	
ACC	AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2	2 NANNY MCPHEE	3 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	4 ULTRAVIOLET
M2	MARKET! MARKET!	1 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	2 MOMENTS OF LOVE		
		3 CHINESE TALL STORY	4 BANDIDAS	5 THE HILLS HAVE EYES	

At the Activity Center

Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service Numbers: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm
Greenbelt - 752 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER
Tahanang Walang Hagdan "A Taste to Experience" April 10 to 11, 2006	Easter Fun at Town April 16, 2006
AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Sign Language Association of Cebu's Culminating Activity April 10, 2006	Cartoon Network Summer Camp April 22, 2006

GREENBELT
Bossa Nova with SITTI
April 19, 2006

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Ayala MUSEUM
Registration is now ongoing for Ayala Museum's
Summer Art Festival Workshop 2006
For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 loc 29 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org

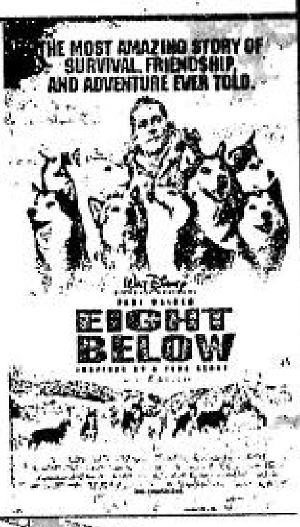
BEFORE ROMEO & JULIET THERE WAS
TRISTAN & ISOLDE

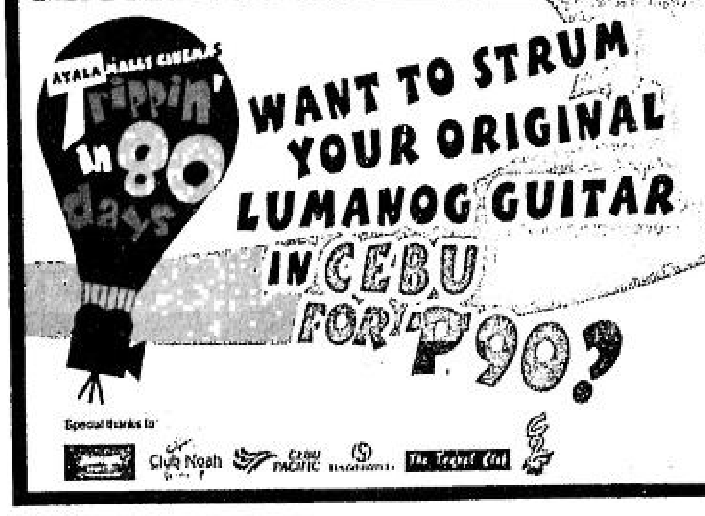
Be among the first to watch at regular admission price
SPECIAL SNEAK PREVIEW
April 10 (Mon.), 11 (Tue.) & 12 (Wed.)

GLORIETTA 1 & 4
GREENBELT 3
ALABANG TOWN CENTER
MARKET! MARKET!

MTRCB Rating:
TRISTAN & ISOLDE: Restricted 13
EIGHT BELOW: General Audience

20th Century Fox
Buena Vista International
Ayala Malls Love malls!


THE MOST AMAZING STORY OF SURVIVAL, FRIENDSHIP, AND ADVENTURE EVER TOLD.
EIGHT BELOW



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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. AI-200, Series of 2006

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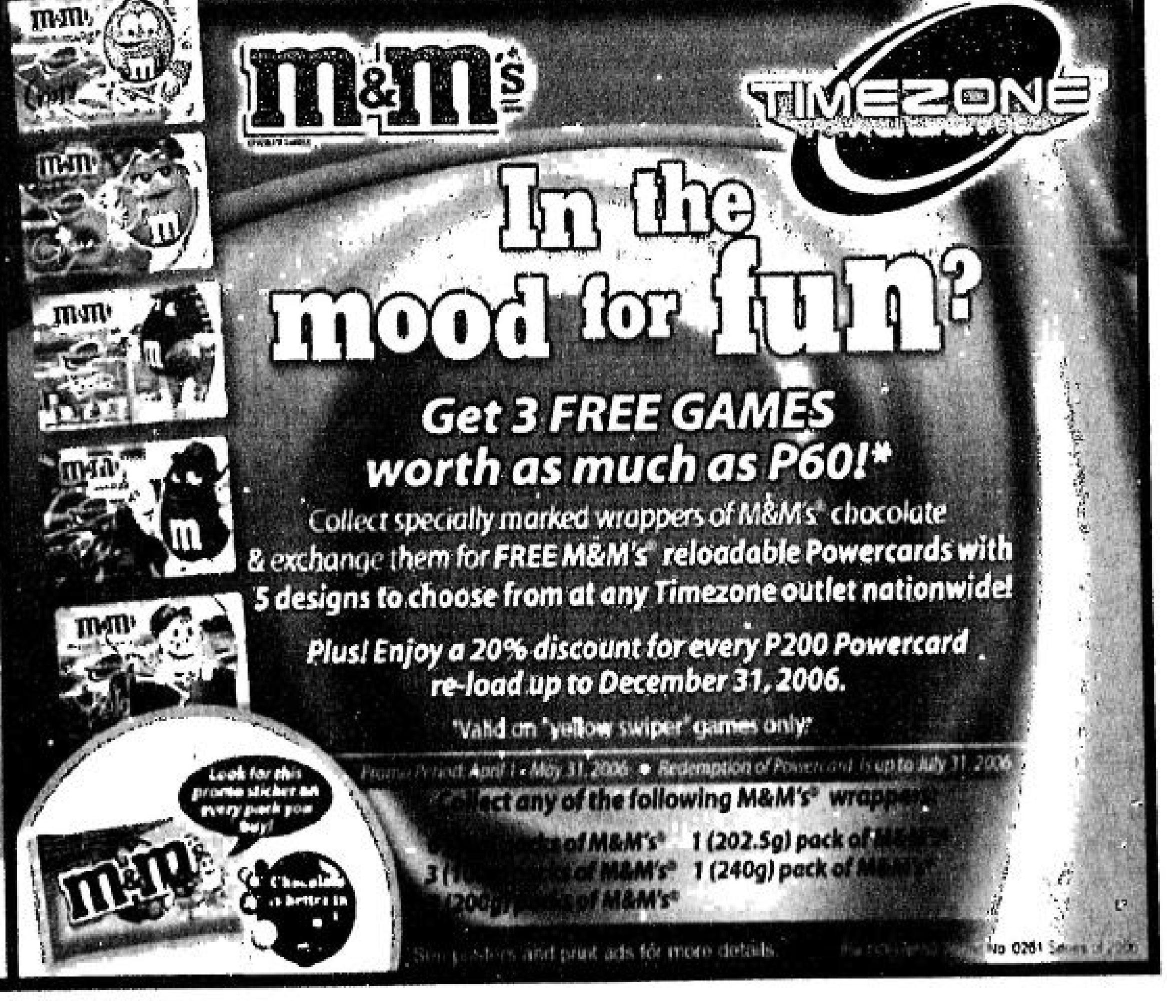
glorietta Greenbelt Ayala Malls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See posters and print ads for more details. [illegible] No 0261 Series of 2006

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BC-5
f dance

LEBRATION OF DANCE—AT who have two back-to-back

by **Lucy Torres-Gomez**, fields o are teamed up with profes- ents, and compete for the top

elebrities in contention were and **William Martinez.** They petition numbers—so hard, in t jurors decided to retain all nals last night.

essed with **Wowee**'s perfor- zed by uncommon zest, preci- l us that, before he became a forming teeth as part of a male

he used to be as a TV-film ac- ncing career another go—he's

on points with viewers on the her to rise above her superfi- d. She now does "legit" danc- ks like she feels better about

pursue this new and more en- reer, viewers enthusiastically ansform herself on "Shall We

petition has some plus points, ed by the US show, "Dance ws it.

y contestants, "Dance Fever" all over the United States and stars of terpsichore.

und that the eight dancers or he show each week are all ex- the show's jurors have their sing the very best from the al-

get to be so good? Well, they y're children, they have many n and compete, and their po-

em to be more serious in de- dancers, thus the high level of r."

" will eventually help raise the Shall We Dance?," so viewer as they enjoy Dance Night on

* * *

Prime Time" every Sunday at night's show was **Meg Ryan**'s s. The romantic-comedy star e, her very public divorce, and new passion.

n Weekdays, **Oprah** Win- 's talk show is aired on Star ld at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Sched- of features this week:

oday, 20 years of **Oprah** fa- e moments on her show.

omorrow, unforgettable ts return. Then, a dying her **Oprah** never forgot. Plus, man who touched **Oprah**'s t with a simple "Thank you."

pril 12, famous gospel singer **Franklin** admits his addic- to porn.

pril 13, resident interior deco- **Nate** reveals his Wildest m makeover. Then, actor es **Denton**'s dream fulfilled, **Oprah**'s wild ride—with 85

pril 14, see why many people getting hooked on the Debt

engke tour

i-Ai dela Alas started her ngke tour to promote Maggie ic Sarap granule seasoning rday at Muñoz Market and North Edsa. On April 23, She visit the Naga Public Market Plaza Quezon in Naga.

lk this way

rom "July" of Pasig City: ave you seen the "Walk of e" in Eastwood City? wonder what the ria are for osing h ts should iven stars. rs and esses?

FEEDBACK

Pilita Corrales has one. rd winners? I doubt because e aren't.

was looking for the names of eo Vasquez, Maricel Sori- Aga Muhlach, Lea Salonga, Ann Santos... They're not e. The youngest is Sharon eta. No problem there, be- e Mega deserves it. But last k, I was shocked to see the e of... Ruffa Gurierrez!

ow could that be? Is it be- e she won as Second cess in the Miss World tilt? Gloria Diaz should be e, too because, being the Filipina Miss Universe! Hav- very rich husband is not an t's achievement, is it? Then is Ruffa's name there? Was an ex-deal for something? his is an insult to other artists deserve more credit. Duh. 's next? Anabelle Rama and ard Gutierrez? Hardiharhar!

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN • THX
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
2 ICE AGE 2
11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
3 BANDIDAS
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 EIGHT BELOW
Sneak Preview
5 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
6 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
Sneak Preview
7 MOMENTS OF LOVE
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
8 JUST FRIENDS
1:25 3:35 5:45 7:55 10:00
9 SHE'S THE MAN
12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00
10 BASIC INSTINCT 2
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ICE AGE 2 12:20 2:20 4:20 6:20 8:25 10:00
2 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
Sneak Preview
3 JUST FRIENDS 12:00 1:40 3:20
BASIC INSTINCT 2 5:30 7:40 9:50
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
5 BANDIDAS
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
6 EIGHT BELOW
Sneak Preview
7 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 JUST FRIENDS
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
2 ICE AGE 2
12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:15
3 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
11:05 1:35 4:05 6:35 9:05
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
Sneak Preview
5 EIGHT BELOW
Sneak Preview
6 BASIC INSTINCT 2
1:05 3:40 6:20 9:05
7 BANDIDAS
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
8 MOMENTS OF LOVE
11:25 1:50 4:15 6:40 9:05

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
2 BASIC INSTINCT 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE Sneak Preview
5 ICE AGE 2
6 EIGHT BELOW Sneak Preview

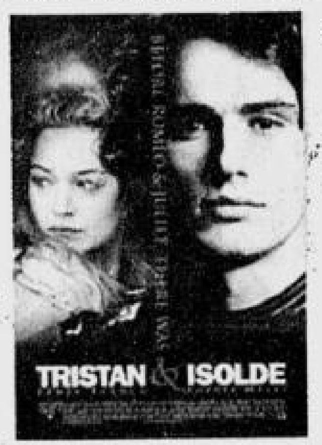
CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 BANDIDAS
2 ICE AGE 2
3 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
4 GRANDMA'S BOY

CHECK THIS OUT ▸▸



before Romeo and Juliet there was...

TRISTAN & ISOLDE

from executive producer Ridley Scott comes a sweeping tale of love and loss, myth and fate, based on the timeless Celtic myth of star-crossed passion.

catch the

SNEAK PREVIEWS

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Galleria, Ermita, Metro East,
Pioneer, Novaliches, Imus and Dasmariñas
APRIL 10 to 12

MTRCB Rating: PG-13
OPENS on APRIL 15

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 ICE AGE 2
2 ULTRAVIOLET
3 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 EIGHT BELOW Sneak Preview

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 ICE AGE 2
2 VENOM
3 HOUSE OF FURY
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 V FOR VENDETTA

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 ICE AGE 2
2 NANNY MCPHEE
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
5 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE Sneak Preview

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
4 ICE AGE 2

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 ICE AGE 2
2 NANNY MCPHEE
3 SHE'S THE MAN
4 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
2 NANNY MCPHEE
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2
5 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
6 ULTRAVIOLET

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0458

1 VENOM
2 SHE'S THE MAN
3 ICE AGE 2
4 SAHGGY DOG
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 EIGHT BELOW Sneak Preview

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 HOUSE OF FURY
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 NORTH COUNTRY
4 VENOM
5 ICE AGE 2
6 EIGHT BELOW Sneak Preview

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MARILAO * MOLINO** BATANGAS * LUCENA * CEBU * DAVAO* CAGAYAN DE ORO

**Promo starts on April 15, 2006

MEDIA PARTNERS: 96.3WRocK IFM 93.9

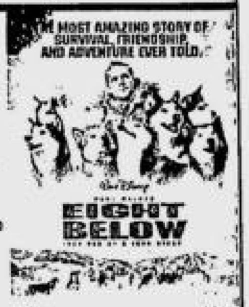
PER DTI NCR PERMIT NO 1175 SERIES OF 2006

SNEAK PREVIEW movietime

EIGHT BELOW

SNEAK PREVIEW on April 10, 11 and 12 at regular ticket prices at the following branches:

Bacoor, Baguio, Batangas, Bicutan, Cagayan De Oro, Cebu, Dasmariñas, Davao Fairview, Iloilo, Manila, Marilao, Megamall, Molino, North EDSA, Pampanga San Lazaro, Southmall, Sta. Mesa, Sta. Rosa, Sucat and Valenzuela



THE MOST AMAZING STORY OF SURVIVAL, FRIENDSHIP, AND ADVENTURE EVER TOLD.
EIGHT BELOW

MTRCB Rating: G OPENS APRIL 15 AT SM CINEMAS Distributed by

TRISTAN & ISOLDE

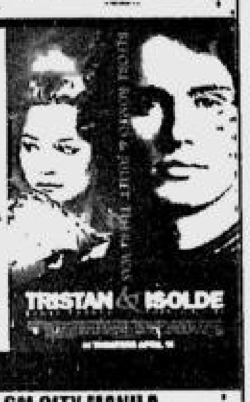
SNEAK PREVIEW on April 10, 11 and 12 at regular ticket prices

Watch it at the following branches:
Bacoor, Bicutan, Cebu, Dasmariñas, Fairview, Manila, Megamall, Molino, North EDSA Pampanga, San Lazaro, Southmall, Sta. Mesa, Sucat and Valenzuela

REGULAR SHOWING STARTS ON APRIL 15!

MTRCB Rating: R-13
(Only aged 13 and above will be admitted)

Distributed by 20th Century Fox



METRO MANILA

THE PODIUM
CINEMA 1
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
CINEMA 2
ICE AGE 2

SM MEGACINEMA
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 FINAL DESTINATION 3
3 ICE AGE 2
4 RESERVED
5 SHE'S THE MAN
6 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
7 JUST FRIENDS
8 VENOM
9 MOMENTS OF LOVE
10 BANDIDAS
11 ULTRAVIOLET
12 CHINESE TALL STORY

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 JUST FRIENDS
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2
5 ULTRAVIOLET
6 VENOM
7 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
8 BANDIDAS

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 V FOR VENDETTA
2 JUST FRIENDS
3 FINAL DESTINATION 3
4 VENOM
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
7 BANDIDAS
8 EIGHT BELOW
9 ICE AGE 2
10 SHE'S THE MAN
11 ULTRAVIOLET
12 NANNY McPHEE

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 BANDIDAS
5 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
6 VENOM
7 NANNY McPHEE
8 JUST FRIENDS
9 SHE'S THE MAN
10 ULTRAVIOLET

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY SAN LAZARO
1 ICE AGE 2
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 BANDIDAS
5 JUST FRIENDS
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY MANILA
1 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
2 BANDIDAS
3 JUST FRIENDS
4 ICE AGE 2
5 SHE'S THE MAN
6 EIGHT BELOW
7 V FOR VENDETTA
8 FINAL DESTINATION 3
9 MOMENTS OF LOVE
10 VENOM
11 ULTRAVIOLET
12 CHINESE TALL STORY

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 ICE AGE 2
2 EIGHT BELOW
3 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 BANDIDAS
6 VENOM
7 CHINESE TALL STORY
8 SHE'S THE MAN
9 JUST FRIENDS

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 TRISTAN & ISOLDE

SM CITY SUCAT
1 ICE AGE 2
2 EIGHT BELOW
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 BANDIDAS

LUZON

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 EIGHT BELOW
3 SYRIANA
4 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY MARILAO
1 FINAL DESTINATION 3
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ICE AGE 2
4 VENOM

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ICE AGE 2
4 V FOR VENDETTA

SM CITY BACOOR
1 FINAL DESTINATION 3
2 VENOM
3 ICE AGE 2
4 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
5 EIGHT BELOW
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE
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SM CITY STA. ROSA
1 SHAGGY DOG
2 ULTRAVIOLET
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 ULTRAVIOLET
3 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
4 ICE AGE 2
5 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY LUCENA
1 HOUSE OF FURY
2 ICE AGE 2
3 V FOR VENDETTA
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY MOLINO
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 SHE'S THE MAN
4 VENOM

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
4 ICE AGE 2
5 GLORY ROAD
6 V FOR VENDETTA
7 MOMENTS OF LOVE
8 FINAL DESTINATION 3

SM CITY ILOILO
1 HOUSE OF FURY
2 RESERVED
3 ICE AGE 2
4 FINAL DESTINATION 3
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 VENOM
7 RESERVED
8 EIGHT BELOW

SM CITY DAVAO
1 CASANOVA
2 NANNY McPHEE
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 THE DARK
5 SYRIANA
6 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY CAGAYAN
1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 RESERVED
3 SHAGGY DOG
4 ICE AGE 2

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What's 'Brokeback' in Chinese?

HONG KONG—THE GAY LOVE STORY "Brokeback Mountain" has spawned a new slang term in Hong Kong.

Headline writers in the Cantonese-speaking territory have started using the new term "dun bui," or "brokeback," to describe homosexual relationships—like the one depicted in the Oscar-winning film by Taiwanese-born director Ang Lee.

The Oriental Daily News recently published a story about a homosexual hangout in southern China, describing it as "public toilet Brokeback Mountain."

Expanding

Another newspaper, Ming Pao Daily News, recently reported that male pop stars Leo Ku and Justin Lo held hands at a concert "Brokeback style."

The slang's meaning seems to be expanding beyond homosexual themes to include relationships that are awkward or just aren't meant to be.

Apple Daily called a pair of politicians prevented from forming a party due to circumstances "obviously a Brokeback couple."

Divided

It was an apparent reference to the inability of the film's gay characters to shun social convention and become a couple.

Cantonese is famous for soaking up all kinds of slang. The language is spoken in Hong Kong, China's southern province of Guangzhou—formerly known as Canton— and in Chinatowns all over the world.

Gay activists are divided on whether the new term is helpful or harmful.

Gay activist Cho Man-kit said Hong Kong media snapped up the word "Brokeback" because it provided a vehicle to discuss homosexuality.

"Everyone wanted a means by which to discuss the homosexual issue without restraint, but there never was one," Cho said. "Once 'Brokeback' emerged, the intense desire to talk about gays was released."

But Roddy Shaw, another gay activist, said he considered most of Hong Kong media's usage of "Brokeback" to be negative because it appeared aimed to exoticize gays.

Rarely used

The term was rarely used in a serious context, such as in stories about gay rights.

"It's devolved into a derogatory term that doesn't sound as bad," Shaw said.

Cho hoped that "Brokeback" would eventually have a positive influence.

"This word is very powerful. The movie is about breaking taboos, about the fluidity of sexual identity and physical love," he said. "It's about the high malleability of human sexuality and how a heterosexual and homosexual relationship can be equally deep."

It's not the first time a movie title has become part of the popular lexicon, often in English.

The 1987 thriller "Fatal Attraction" about how a fling turns into a nightmare for a married man became synonymous with an obsessive affair.

Close encounters

"Sophie's Choice," a 1982 movie about a woman forced to abandon one of her two children as she's sent to a Nazi concentration camp, is often used to describe a hard decision.

After the 1977 aliens-visit-Earth film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" hit theaters, people started to have "close encounters" with all kinds of things.

The terrorist thriller "Snakes on a Plane" hasn't even been released yet and it has already wriggled into the lexicon, according to the Urban Dictionary on the Internet. The website says the phrase can be used for simple existential observations, like "Whaddya gonna do?"

"WHEN I'm 88..."

But hey, man, it's Bon Jovi!

TOKYO—IT MIGHT SEEM A BIT ODD to head off on an international tour when your lead guitarist is nursing a broken arm and you've got a hit called "Who Says You Can't Go Home" rising up the charts.

But, hey, this is Bon Jovi.

"We're working the world with a new record," lead singer Jon Bon Jovi said in an interview Friday in Tokyo, where the band was to kick off a series of six concerts. "We've been out touring for six months. We've got four more to go. This is great."

It's profitable, too—their "Have a Nice Day" tour has pulled in more than $1.2 million, making it the most lucrative tour going right now.

But it hasn't exactly been easy.

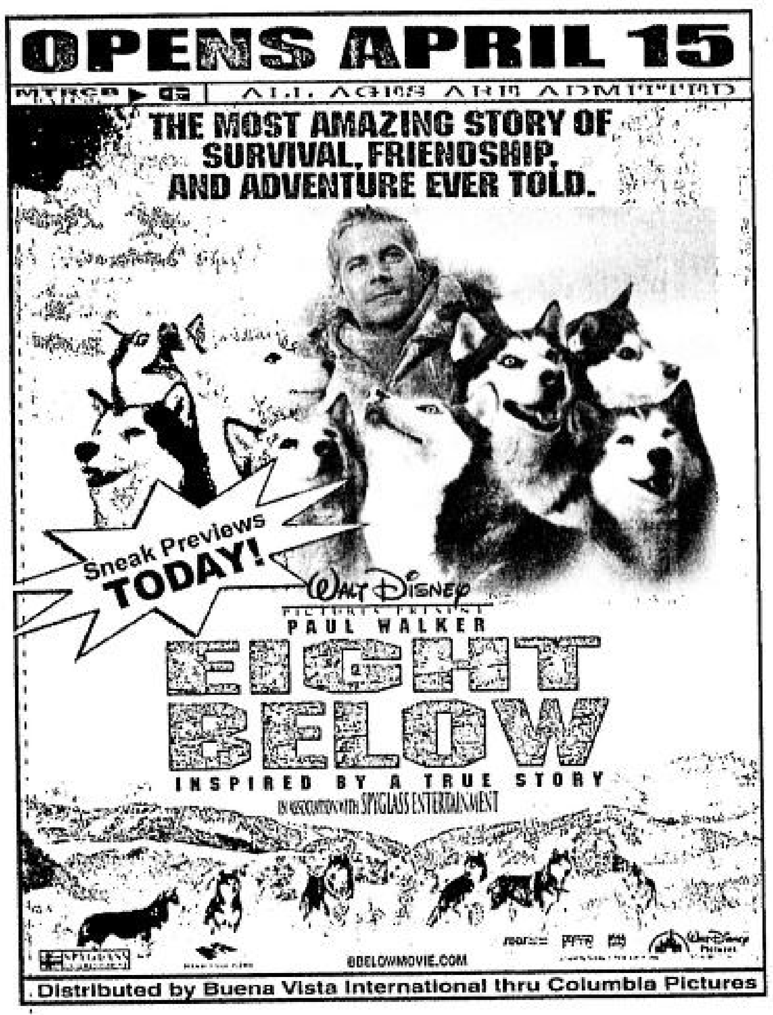
Guitarist Richie Sambora fell in his Los Angeles home and fractured his left arm in two places last month. Bon Jovi said Sambora will be able to play the Japan dates, but he may have to cradle the guitar sitting down, and has been experimenting with putting the strap over his other shoulder.

"We'll see how it goes," Bon Jovi said at his Tokyo hotel. He added that after Japan, the band has three weeks off before heading on to Europe. "That will give him some more time to heal."

Problems aside, Bon Jovi, who turned 44 last month, said that the tour marks something of a turning point.

"I don't need to make records, I don't need to tour," he said. "I'm not chasing anything. That's what you do in your youth. Am I going to be doing this when I'm 88? I don't know."

Eric Talmadge, AP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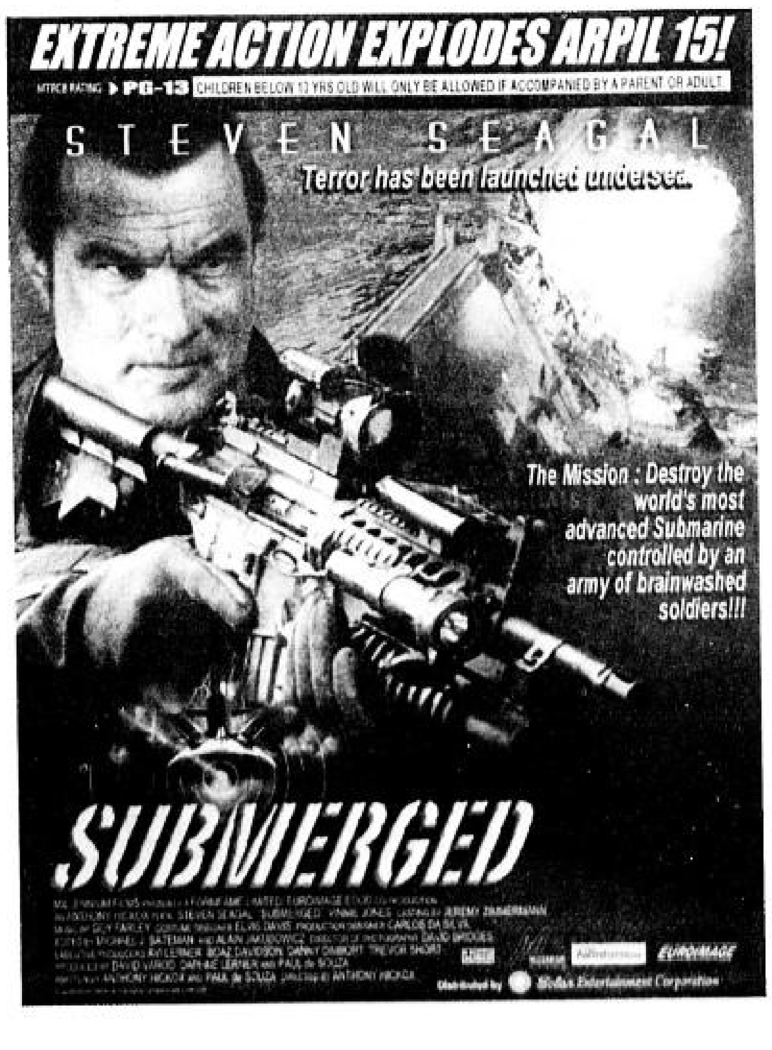
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SHE was born to be on centerstage, she says.

Ledda Beltran is back

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

WITHOUT HESITATION OR PROVOCATION, she asserts that she was born to be on centerstage.

"I've always had the inclination," says character actress Ledda Beltran, not as a confession but as a proud declaration. "I've always enjoyed acting and dancing. If I hear music now, I'd dance at the drop of a hat."

Since doing the lambada in Starbucks would be disconcerting for the other patrons, we settle for a stroll down memory lane instead.

YESTERDAY

In high school at St. Theresa's College Manila, she recounts, she was chairman of the theater company and the dance troupe and a member of the glee club.

"Whenever the exclusive boys' schools like Lourdes and Letran needed a leading lady for their plays, the nuns of St. Theresa's always sent me," Ledda recalls. "I was St. Theresa's export!"

For college, however, she was ready for something different.

"From kinder to high school, I studied in an all-girls' school," she says. "Twelve years was more than enough. I wanted to enroll in University of the Philippines Diliman."

Her "conservative" parents were aghast. "So I took only one college entrance exam and kept it a secret from my mom," says Ledda with a naughty grin. "In effect, I forced them."

Her parents eventually came to accept her audacious act because she blossomed in the liberating atmosphere of UP circa 1970s (she took up Broadcasting).

"I had so much fun in UP," she enthuses. "Those were fantastic years. That was also the time of *Makibaka*..."

Ledda the *colegiala*, however, would rather unleash her "rebelliousness" in the theater.

"The activists called us reactionary," she says, laughing. "I had a great *barkada* on campus. Every Friday, we would hang out, drink beer and have dinner. We called it our 'Thank God, It's Friday' night-out."

GLAMOUR girl and concert producer

She's a character actress in more ways than one—an actress with character to spare

Among her Friday-night pals was Maryo J. de los Reyes, who would later become an award-winning filmmaker.

Maryo directed Ledda in two plays of Dulaang Cafeteria: "Tatlong Manyika" (she played one of the dolls) and "New Yorker from Tondo" (she was the New Yorker").

After college, Ledda worked in the family business and later apprenticed in the broadcast industry.

"I started as production assistant in Channel 9," she relates. "I worked on drama shows like 'Hilda' and 'Ang Makulay na Daigdig ni Nora.'"

Soon enough, Ledda was guesting in several episodes. "I played everything from a prison inmate to a neighbor," she guffaws.

Work on television was draining, she admits. "We started at seven in the evening and wrapped up at seven the following morning. But I didn't mind because I had the chance to act with Nora and Hilda. I also met Lorli Villanueva and Caridad Sanchez."

She could have pursued newscasting and TV hosting, but allowed herself to be "dissuaded by friends." She wanted to buy the Philippine rights to 'Oprah' and host a local version. But I was warned there was no money in it."

Instead, she went into producing—on television and in the concert circuit. "I produced the five-night concert of Mike Francis at the PICC and the Ultra in the late 1980s and the Valentine show of Jose Mari Chan and Regine Velasquez at the Sheraton in the early 1990s."

Although concert producing was exhilarating, she also found it exhausting "because I was hands-on. I took care of everything from negotiations to ticket-selling!"

She was more than content running her catering business and raising her four children until acting beckoned again in 1999.

While having dinner with *Direk* Maryo, she expressed interest in and was promptly offered the part of an executive in "Linlang," starring Richard Gomez, Pops Fernandez and Joyce Jimenez.

Last year, she again appeared in a Maryo film, "Naglalayag," playing one of the friends of lead star Nora Aunor, along with Chanda Romero and Irma Adlawan.

"Naglalayag" served as a happy reunion with Nora.

"I reminded Nora that I wanted to produce her US tour in the late 1980s," she says. "I used to visit her home in Green Meadows and she used to call me 'Mommy'! Unfortunately that concert tour didn't push through."

Also in 2004, she was handled by filmmaker Jose Javier Reyes on the small "Noel") and big screens ("Spirit of the Glass").

On the QTV soap opera "Noel" (which premiered last week), Ledda shares the screen with Gina Alajar, Celia Rodriguez, Pen Medina, Paolo Contis, James Blanco, Tiya Pusit, Irma Adlawan and Tanya Garcia.

"One thing about directors like Maryo and Joey is that they give actors enough elbow room to bring out their creativity," she reports.

She had a ball with the prosthetic makeup. "I had to look convincing as a 70-year-old *mayordoma*." She similarly enjoyed her scenes with the indomitable Ms. Celia, who was her Scrooge-like boss.

"We didn't have to raise our voices," she explains. "All Ms. Celia and I had to do was look at each other and the emotions would come out. It was very challenging."

Ledda is now considering a theater comeback. "I don't want to stop acting," she chimes in. "I can play anyone from ages 40 to 70!"

But her most cherished part is her real-life role as mom to her four kids.

"My eldest daughter has finished her master's degree in Communications," she beams. "My second daughter also finished her master's in Management Information Systems. My third daughter is now working on her master's in Education. My youngest son is in high school. I was blessed with great kids!"

AS A loyal mayordoma in QTV's "Noel"

PHOTOS BY RUDY ESPERAS

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS COURTESY OF LEDDA BELTRAN

ROUNDUP

Brangelina in Africa

BRAD Pitt and Angelina Jolie

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA—Brad Pitt and his pregnant partner Angelina Jolie are staying at a secluded Namibian beach resort, surrounded by tight security and speculation their baby will be born in Africa.

Namibian media reported that immigration officials confirmed the celebrity couple and five other people, including two children, arrived in Walvis Bay Monday morning on a chartered jet from Paris.

It is unclear when Jolie is due.

The actors have rented all 14 rooms and suites at the Burning Shores resort, a luxury boutique hotel on Long Beach north of Walvis Bay and near the famous dunes of the Namibian desert. A private security firm and local police officials have cordoned off the area and threatened to confiscate any cameras, Namibian media reported. *AP*

Doors 'reunion'

ROBBY Krieger of "The Doors"

LOS ANGELES—The iconic 1960s rock band The Doors will be reunited on screen in two new documentaries to mark the 40th anniversary of the group's founding, Daily Variety said Friday.

Producer Dick Wolf is preparing a feature-length documentary that will play in theaters, while chronicler Stacy Peralta is making a social history to coincide with next year's four-decade milestone.

Wolf's film will be directed by Bill Guttentag, who won an Oscar for his documentary "Twin Towers" in 2003.

It will show never-before-seen archive footage and interviews with the parents and sister of Doors frontman Jim Morrison, who died in Paris in 1971 at the age of 27 after a meteoric rise to fame.

The three living members of the Doors will co-produce the film.

The second film, "Six Nights, Six Records, Six Years," a social history as seen through the Doors' lives and music, will be directed by Peralta, who wrote the skateboarding movie "Lords of Dogtown," Variety said. *AFP*

Top screenplays

LOS ANGELES—"Casablanca" and a pair of "Godfathers" are among the 101 greatest screenplays ever, according to members of the Writers Guild of America.

Film and television writers ranked the screenplays in the guild's first best-of list, released Thursday.

The guild's picks: 1) "Casablanca," 2) "The Godfather," 3) "Chinatown," 4) "Citizen Kane," 5) "All About Eve," 6) "Annie Hall," 7) "Sunset Boulevard," 8) "Network," 9) "Some Like It Hot," 10) "The Godfather II." *AP*

Sold out

MADONNA

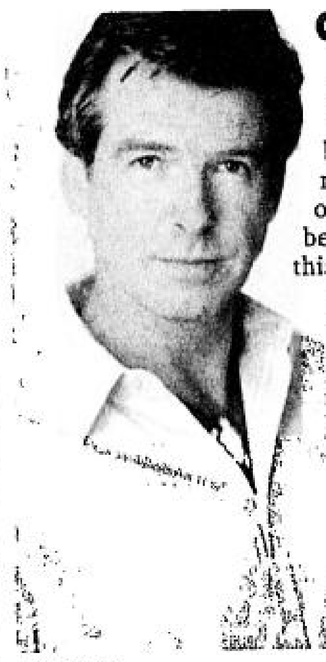
LONDON—Tickets to Madonna's six London concerts sold out in a single morning on Friday despite a price tag of up to 160 pounds ($280.45).

The organizers of the US pop singer's "Confessions" tour added a seventh London concert, at Wembley Arena, on Friday afternoon after the first six sold out. The BBC reported that tickets were already available on the Internet for 410 pounds ($718.65).

The tour kicks off on May 21 in Los Angeles.

Madonna will also give another British performance, in the Welsh capital Cardiff on July 30. *AFP*

Once a spy



PIERCE Brosnan

LISBON—Irish actor Pierce Brosnan, who played Agent 007 in four of the James Bond movies before being dropped from the series last year, has resumed the role of a suave spy in television ads for beer that began airing in Portugal this month.

The two 45-second spots "recreate situations that could have been lifted from the films which made the actor famous, namely the movies from the James Bond saga," Portuguese brewer Central de Cervejas said in a statement.

In the only spot to be aired so far, Brosnan's character uses a diamond to pay for a six-pack of the beer which he then shares with a slim young woman over a romantic dinner. AFP

The child in Whoopi

LOS ANGELES—She has an Oscar, a Grammy, a Tony and a Golden Globe, but there's one bit of hardware missing from Whoopi Goldberg's awards shelf—a soccer trophy.

"Sometimes I wish that I could run as fast as they do and do just 90 percent of the things I see those folks doing," Goldberg said of the weekend warriors who cram the athletic fields of parks everywhere.

She's done the next best thing, created a new television show about a group of girls from disparate backgrounds joined in New York City's Central Park by their common love—soccer.

The show, "Just for Kicks," debuts today in the United States on Nickelodeon, the children's cable network. *AP*

ENTERTAINMENT

No more tears for Rufa Mae Quinto

RUFA MAE QUINTO

SEXY COMEDIENNE RUFFA MAE Quinto says she has finally recovered from the painful breakup of her six-year relationship with former PBA cager Rudy Hatfield.

"I have to move on. *Tama na ang pag-iyak.* No more tears *na ang drama ko,*" Rufa Mae told entertainment writers.

She's busy preparing for her Aliw Theater concert, "RMQ: Bomshell Unleashed," on May 27.

RUSHES

Bonding with kids

"Unang Hirit" host Regine Tolentino spent quality time with her two daughters, Azucena Reign and Alyssandra Reigen, and mom Regina, at the Glorietta Mall in Makati on Saturday.

The girls wore identical floral sundresses, while their mom donned a halter top of the same fabric. They bought hotdogs and lemonade at Food Choices in Glorietta 4.

No show

ABS-CBN has reportedly offered Kris Aquino a show with former boyfriend Robin Padilla that is similar to the crime thriller "Alias."

"*Ayaw* ni James," was Kris' alleged reply. The actress-TV host recently admitted that she married basketball player James Yap in a civil ceremony at friend Boy Abunda's house in July.

Shy Sam

It is hard to believe that Sam Milby is shy. Too shy, in fact, that in a presscon that announced his endorsement deal (with Jollibee), he admitted—just before a preview of the TV ad was shown—that he wasn't used to seeing himself on TV.

Apparently, his shyness is also evident when it comes to his love life. The 22-year-old Fil-Am openly admits he likes "Pinoy Big Brother" host Toni Gonzaga.

Was he courting her? His answer: "I do like her but I feel like I want to wait for the right time."

From his recent trip to Milan recently he brought *pasalubong* for Toni: "Four or five tops, a pair of shorts and long pants."

REGINE TOLENTINO

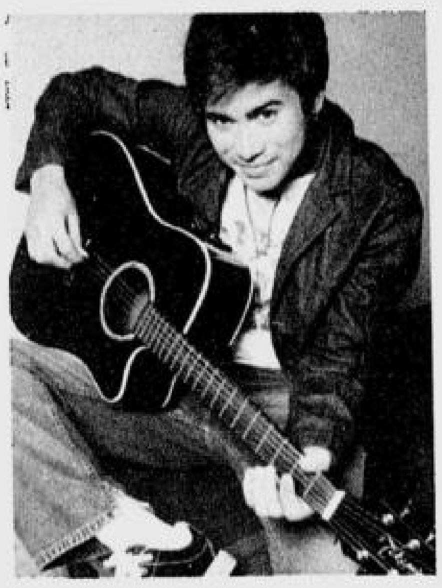
Pay up, Ms Griffith!

In Lost Angeles, a costume designer is suing Melanie Griffith for allegedly refusing to pay nearly $26,000 for dressing the actress and her daughters for this year's Golden Globes Awards and reneging on a promise to mention his name on the red carpet.

KRIS AQUINO

In the suit filed Friday in Los Angeles Superior Court, Niklas J. Palm claimed he designed dresses for Griffith and her daughters Dakota Johnson and Stella Banderas to wear to the January event. He said he sent her the bill on Jan. 16, and Griffith was overdue in making any payments.

Palm also claimed that Griffith promised he would "receive publicity that money could not buy, then conveniently forget his name when reporters on the red carpet specifically asked (her) who designed her beautiful gown." *AP*



MELANIE Griffith with daughters Dakota (left) and Stella.

She doesn't want her kid to see her as a villainess

By Marinel R. Cruz

TAKE FIVE

CHARACTER ACTRESS GLYdel Mercado said she does not mind playing villainess in her television shows as long as her year-old daughter does not watch them.

"I remember the time Aneeza got scared of her grandma after seeing her on 'Extra Challenge.' When her Mamita visited us, Aneeza didn't want to go near her," Glydel told a group of writers over lunch on Wednesday.

Aneeza is Glydel's daughter with Tonton Gutierrez, son of veteran drama actress Liza Lorena.

In the Tagapagmana episode of "Extra Challenge Milyonaryo," Lorena played the mean Doña Alfaro who is searching for the heir to the family wealth. She puts eight contenders through difficult tasks.

Glydel is Loren in the fifth season of "Now and Forever" ("Duyan") on GMA 7, which premieres April 17.

"My parents own a hacienda, where the lead character, Adea (Dawn Zulueta) works. I make her stay there miserable," said Glydel.

You're becoming known as a TV *kontrabida*. Aren't you worried about being typecast?

Not really. Sofia—my character in "Daisy Siete"—is also mean [but] I don't play a baddie in "Etheria."

What's good about *kontrabida* roles?

Hindi ka pagod. Compared to the lead actress, you don't have to cry all the time. The only drawback is that you're always angry and you hurt people physically. I feel guilty and embarrassed whenever I slap Jana (Roxas, co-star) or pull her hair. There's one scene where I force-feed her a handful of pepper. I kept saying sorry after the take.

Loren and I have nothing in common. As soon as the director shouts, "cut!" I go back to my real self.

What role are you most comfortable doing?

Ang pang-aapi ng tao. (laughs). If you're playing the lead, you keep thinking, "This show should rate in order for it to last." *Mabigat na sa dibdib, masakit pa sa ulo.*

Who is the ultimate *kontrabida*?

Celia Rodriguez. I learned a lot from her. She can scare you just by looking in your eyes. But in real life, she's not like that at all. When I first met her, I told myself: "*Hindi ko yata makakasundo ito.*" But we became close friends. We even share a room on the set. When we're not working, we chat on the phone. *Tita* Cel gave me with a lot of earrings and necklaces. She's a fashionista.

What is it like working with the Sexbomb dancers? Do they really quarrel a lot?

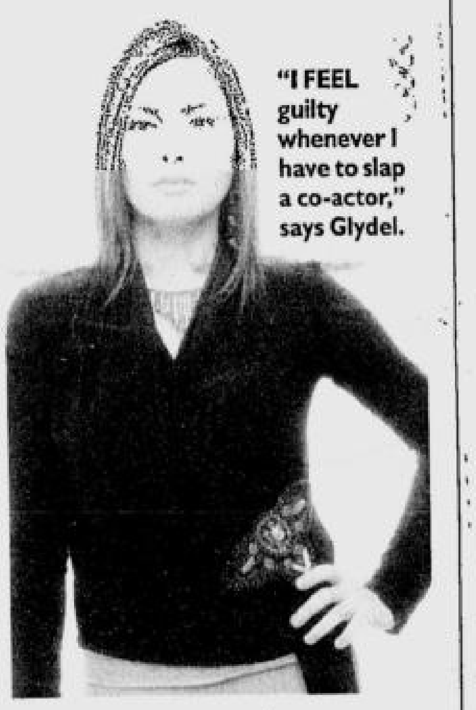
No they don't. At the time Rochelle (Pangilinan) and Jopay (Paguio) were rumored to be fighting, I saw they were getting along well. I guess some people make things up because they're jealous.

Did you have to adjust much now that you have Aneeza?

There's been no major adjustment. Ton and I didn't even have to wake up in the middle of the night because of her. The most difficult part was giving birth. I had hypertension while in labor.

Between you and Tonton, who is the stricter parent?

I'm the disciplinarian. Ton is so funny. *Para gumanda ang image n'ya sa anak namin,* he would tell me, 'Mommy *palo mo nga*' when Aneeza gets bratty. I think I'm starting to scare her (laughs).


"I FEEL guilty whenever I have to slap a co-actor," says Glydel.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Monday, April 10, 2006

Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network
American Idol
Wed-Thurs-Fri 10pm
ABC
Ita Tayo!

ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			WNCAA (Rerun)	National Geographic	Speed		TNA Impact		Sentro	How Clean Is Your House	ABC Action Movies				Big News	Fear Factor		Toloo TV	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World		Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Panday	Princess Lulu		OK Fine! Whatever			Insider
AXN		Killing Time				Boarding Pass	E Buzz			Amazon		Sports Disaster VI		The 4400 (Season 2)		Lost (Season II)		House	
Cartoon Network	Police Academy	Richie Rich	Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Camp Lazlo	Coconut Fred's Fruit Salad Island	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Yu-Gi-Oh Double Duel		Powerpuff Girls		Mucha Lucha!	Duck Dodgers	Justice League	Samurai Jack
Cinema One		Kontrabando				Fatima				Oops Teka Lang Diskarte Ko 'To!				Linlang				Anghel Sa Lupa	
Cinemax				Dragonfly (4:15 PM)				S.W.A.T				The Nugget			When The Dark Man Calls			Sleepless In Seattle (11:05PM)	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		What Should You Do?		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Profiler		Forensic Files	Mastermind	Law & Order		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Crossing Jordan		Bones		The Closer	
Discovery Channel				Monster Garage		Building The Winter Games		I Shouldn't Be Alive		Australia - A Natural History		Life Unlimited		Secrets Of Bal-Bishop Yamato		I Shouldn't Be Alive		The FBI Files	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Unstalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven That's So Trendy Week	Wonderful World Of Disney			Black Hole High	So Little Time	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Rangers	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Pro Billiards '05 WPA Doubles 9-Ball C'ship		World Pool Masters '01		Asian X Games '05 Presented by Kia		Extreme Programming Sports Mania		Basketball '06 College Slam Dunk & 3-Point Contest		Sportscenter Asia		Sportscenter Asia	LPGA Golf Nabisco Classic Honoring				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		America's Next Top Model 4		Change of Heart	Eliminidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Project Runway		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		America's Next Top Model 4		ET Weekend	
EWTN	Benediction And Devotion	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Bible Treasure Chest	Image Of God	Rosary With Mother Angelica	EWTN Gallery	G.K. Chesterton: The Apostle Of Common Sense II	Threshold Of Hope		Sunday Night With (Encore) Fr. Benedict Groeschel		Daily Mass Live		Angelus (9:15 PM)	Good Or Evil: Who Decides?	The Gospel Of John	Freedom & Authority	Catholic Compass	
Fox News		Fox Report Sunday		Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Bulls & Bears	Cavuto On Business	Forbes On Fox	Cashin' In	Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	First Love Of A Royale Prince		Dragonball Z	Great Teacher Onizuka	La Robe de Mariage	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Majika	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon	Jewel In The Palace/Lupet Ka, Isusumbong Kita			Saksi		
Hallmark Channel		Child Of Our Time 2002		Dog Gone Love (4:15 PM)				Bewitched	The Nanny	Family Law III		Missing II		Judging Amy		Redeemer			Judging Amy (11:45PM)
HBO			Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star				Walking Tall - Part 2			Congo (7:15 PM)				Suspect Zero			Vampire In Brooklyn		
Hero TV	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Gamburger	Gosaurer	Raijin-Oh	Beyblade G-Revolution	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Naruto	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Gosaurer
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Krusada Kontra Krimen		Home Shopping Network		ME TV		PTA Best Of The Philippines		Global Family Series	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Bottomline		Afterburn		X-Men Evolution	Beat The Geeks	Mad TV			Family Guy	The Late Show David Letterman		Jack In The Box			
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Food 911	E! Extra Celebrity Adventures		NY Fashion Week	Martha		Radical Sabbatical	Genuine Article	It's Good To Be	Style Star
MTV Philippines		Wildboyz		MTV Hits	Pop Inc		2006 MAA Gaming Spaces	MTV Hits		Get Spotted	Homecoming	Massive	Diary of Amanda Bynes	TRL		Wildboyz		MTV Hits	Brand New
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXILOG	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mobile MYX	Top Picks	Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXILOG
National Geographic	Africa From The Ground Up	Ultimate Survivor		Sea Of Snakes		Wildlife Diary	Planet Wild	Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		Terrorism Week: Bioterror Alert/Bali Conspiracy/Spouses' Animal Aging Secrets		In The Womb		Journey Into [illegible]/The Land Reborn/The Big Top	
NBN		Teledyaryo Alas-Tres		Teledyaryo Sports Alas.	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Teledyaryo W/ Ely Lungat & Angelique Lazo		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo Final Edition		Dial M		Bantay OCW With Susan K			
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Hiram Na Mukha				Utang Ko Sa'yo Aking Buhay				Mahirap Maging Pogi				Magic Kingdom				Gloria Labandera
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zenfix	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Love At Aegean Sea	Irene	Mars	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	H3O Hahaha...Over!		News On Q	[illegible]		Irene	Over The Green Fields
RPN 9	TV Shopping					Global Window		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Score Tactics	NBA On RPN	Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Kaalaman		Newswatch Now	Global Window	Cargo For Truth	
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		Quantum Global						SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports				All England Finals						Sagupaan		NBA Game: Suns vs Supersonics					Sportsdesk	Asian Badminton Finals	
Sports Plus					FIFA Preview Series 8	Ultimate Fighting Championship				Arena Football						Bell South Classic Highlights		This Is The PGA Tour	
Star Movies			Desolation Sound			Hoodlum (5:10 PM)					Hostile Hostage (7:20 PM)			Gattaca			Challenge The Last Disciple		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Ed		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	My Wife And Kids (Series 2)	Still Standing	King Of Queens	Frasier	Monk		Seinfeld	My Wife And Kids (Series 2)
Studio 23		Masked Rider Ryuki				Batman Beyond	Sports Report	Sports	TBA	Wazzup Wazzup	The Bachelor Season 6		Charmed (8:20 PM)	Lost (9:10 PM)		News Central	Miss Match		Travel Time

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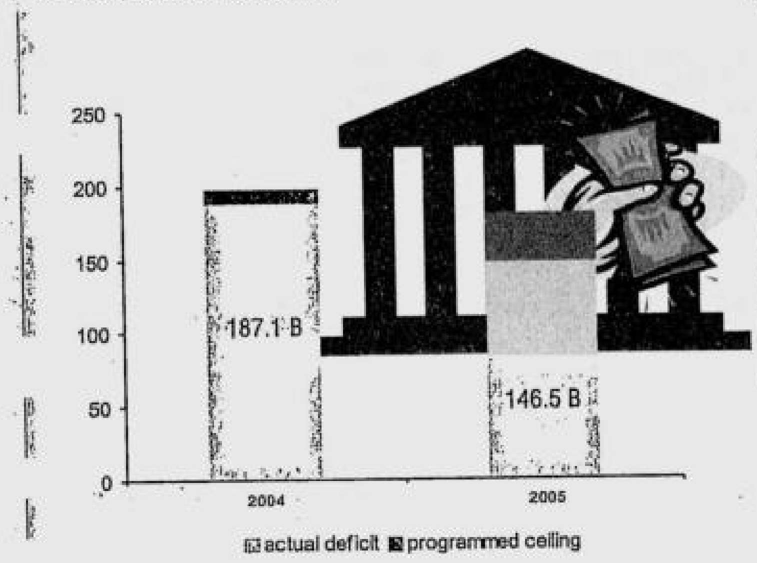
INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Lower fiscal deficit in 2005

The National Government's fiscal deficit for 2005 was P33.5 billion lower than the programmed ceiling of P180 billion. Since 2003, actual deficit has been lower than projected.



Source: Bureau of the Treasury

Kate Pedroso PDI Research

Funds to go to education, infra projects, health

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT HAS COMMITTED TO ALLOCATE P410.4 BILLION of its revenues over the next three years to boost spending for infrastructure and other priority sectors.

The inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee approved last week a plan to set aside an extra budget each year from 2007 to 2009 for new projects in four priority sectors—infrastructure, basic education, health, and government compensation or personal services.

The budget would amount to P49.6 billion for 2007, P127.3 billion for 2008 and P233.5 billion for 2009, official documents showed.

Out of additional funds earmarked on top of obligations already programmed for projects in the pipeline for each year, infrastructure will get the lion's share in line with the government's target to raise annual infrastructure spending as a ratio of gross domestic product from 2.2 to as much as 5 percent over the medium term.

Based on the plan, infrastructure spending will increase by P28.1 billion in 2007, P75.9 billion in 2008 and P149.7 billion in 2009.

For the three-year period, infrastructure will get a total of P253.7 billion or 62 percent of the extra budget, the documents showed.

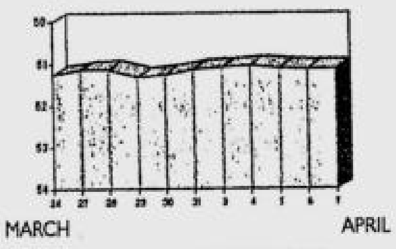
Projects focused on basic education, on the other hand, will get an additional P55.8 billion for the next three years, health and personal services will receive P4.6 billion, and personal services, P97.4 billion.

With this "forward-looking" budget process, the government hopes to match costs of

GOV'T/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱51.12 = $1

As of 5 p.m., April 7, 2006

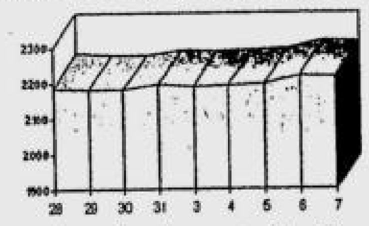
¥117.63 = $1

As of 5 p.m., April 7, 2006

GOLD: $596.50-597.00

per ounce Hong Kong, April 7, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Weak trading seen

WEAK TRADING IS EXPECTED THIS WEEK AS investors take a long break for the Lenten holidays.

The stock market managed to eke out gains last week as the composite price index closed one percent higher week-on-week to 2,216.

"For this holiday-shortened week, we see

WEAK/ B2

WHAT'S INSIDE

Del Monte gravy /B3

Benguet Corp. sees brighter prospects /B7

STUDY NOTES FLAWS OF RP SYSTEM

Professionals evade ₱25.5B in taxes a year

FOR EVERY PESO OF INDIVIDUAL income taxes collected by the government, salaried employees shell out about 92 centavos while the self-employed and professionals pump in only 8 centavos—a heavy leakage condoned by a voluntary tax assessment system, a World Bank study suggested.

The study on the government's tax reform programs, circulated by the WB during the recent Philippine Development Forum, cited estimates from the National Tax Research Center that taxes evaded by self-employed and professionals such as doctors and lawyers amounted to about P25.5 billion a year in the last five years.

In 2005, it noted that salaried employees paid a total of P94.2 billion in taxes compared to self-employed and professionals who contributed only P8.2 billion, "undermining the de jure progressivity of the Philippines income tax system."

"The reliance of BIR on voluntary assessment is symptomatic of severe administrative weaknesses in implementing tax laws," the study noted.

But despite the structural problem in the country's tax system,

PROFESSIONALS/ B6

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Agriculture seen growing at faster pace

Neda cites growth drivers till 2010

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTS the country's farm output to grow at a faster pace of 3.5 to 4 percent this year versus the 2-percent expansion in 2005 despite risks of torrential rains arising from the La Niña weather phenomenon.

Official documents presented by Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri to the international donor community during the Philippine Development Forum showed that the government was likewise banking on the industry and services sectors to expand by 5.4 to 6.2 percent and 6.4 to 7 percent, respectively.

The industry sector grew by 5.3 percent and the services sector by 6.3 percent last year.

These are the major growth drivers behind the government's forecast of a 5.5-6.2 percent growth in gross domestic product for this year, the documents showed.

Agriculture, which accounts for about 19 percent of domestic output, was forecast to grow by an average of 4 percent a year until 2010, as modernization was seen to boost productivity.

The fishery sector, for instance, was expected to be driven by aquaculture, partly due to strong demand for seaweeds across the globe where the Philippines stood as the top exporter of carageenan.

For this year alone, the rosier outlook for the farm sector was due to the increased planting of hybrid rice, a sustained growth of 6 percent by the fishery sector and strong external demand for high-value commercial crops.

On the other hand, the industry sector, which accounts for about 33 percent of the domestic economy, is expected to be driven by the growth in mining, construction and manufacturing.

The Philippines, the fifth most mineralized country in the world, seeks to benefit from the surge in optimism arising from a Supreme Court ruling that favors foreign participation in joint-venture mining projects.

Private construction, on the other hand, is seen to be driven by demand from overseas Filipino workers while positive growth is expected from both domestic- and export-oriented manufacturers.

Growth in the services sector, which accounts for the largest share of GDP at 48 percent, is seen to be fueled by the booming call centers and business process outsourcing as well as faster growth in wholesale/retail trade, tourism and transport sector.

Telecommunication is also seen setting the pace for services, forecast to expand briskly over the medium term due to greater competition from VoIP (voice-over-Internet protocol) technology and new partnerships with international mobile operators.

The government expects GDP to grow by 5.8-6.6 percent next year, 5.9-.6.7 percent in 2008, 6.2-7.2 percent in 2009 and 6.3-7.3 percent in 2010.

Catching up with tax evasion

No Free Lunch

Cielito F. Habito

IN THEIR PAPER "BENEATH THE FISCAL CRIsis" released early last year, Ateneo economists and political scientists lamented the fundamental injustice in the government's usual approach to raising additional revenues. This is the tendency to penalize the honest taxpayers with higher or even more taxes, while doing little to have the traditional tax evaders pay their commensurate share of the public finance burden.

The brunt of the burden inevitably falls on the middle class, much of whose taxes are already withheld by their employers—and not always duly remitted to the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) at that. They also pay their taxes as they make their regular purchases of consumption goods and services, i.e. in the VAT and other sales taxes that are part of their payments—and here again, these taxes are not always dutifully passed on by the merchants to BIR.

No escape

A 2003 study by the National Tax Research Center (NTRC) covering the five-year period 1998-2002 estimated total evasion from individual and corporate income taxes and the VAT to average P127 billion a year. This is about the size of the government's expected budget deficit for this year. A more recent estimate by the Department of Finance places the amount of annual tax evasion at P243 billion, almost twice the earlier NTRC estimate.

More than half or 54.1 percent of the unpaid taxes were traced by the NTRC study to evasion by corporations, 26.7 percent to evasion by businessmen and professionals, 41.6 percent to evasion of the VAT, and only 4.6 percent attributed to salaried taxpayers. No surprise here, of course. Wage and salary workers never even get that money to pass their hands.

What has the government done lately to raise more revenues? The most recent move was the increase of the VAT rate and the expansion of its coverage, packaged with a temporary increase in the corporate income tax rate from 32 to 35 percent. All this is hoped to raise an additional P80 billion this year. But the law only makes a difference for those who are already paying the VAT and corporate income taxes obediently. Worse, it is quite likely that their numbers will even diminish as some of these obedient taxpayers may be driven to evasion by the heavier tax burden.

SNITS

The problem is that the government keeps passing the buck to Congress to produce the needed additional revenues, when it has always been enforcement of tax laws that has been the problem. Congress cannot legislate better compliance or better tax collection. And yet now comes another legislative measure aiming to do just that. The House approved last week on second reading a revival of the simplified net income taxation scheme or SNITS. In principle, SNITS is supposed to improve income tax compliance (translation: reduce evasion) by the self-employed and professionals by offering them a 40-percent optional standard deduction. Itemized deductions are also limited to direct costs; for example, representation expenses will no longer be an allowable deduction.

Closer analysis tells me that the expected revenue increase from the bill would really boil down to the higher rates of income tax it provides, not so much from reduced evasion. As passed by the House, tax rates will increase by anywhere from 1 to 4 percentage points for those with taxable incomes beyond P55,000. While it purports to give a break to lower-income taxpayers by raising exemption levels, it will once again hit the already obedient middle-class taxpayers with even heavier taxes.

As for the habitual evaders, not even offering optional standard deductions and limiting allowable itemized deductions will improve compliance when they have already decided beforehand how much tax they actually want to pay—and will simply ask their accountants to make the necessary adjustments to arrive at the desired figure.

Tightening the noose

To its credit, the BIR has been tightening the noose lately, making it more and more difficult for individual taxpayers to hide income. Through formal agreements with the SEC, LTO and other government agencies, the BIR now has access to the computer records on taxpayers' ownership of vehicles, equities, landholdings, and other forms of wealth and income. Starting this year, it is requiring employers and contractors to submit monthly lists of payees and employees on whom taxes have been withheld, thereby making it even more difficult for professionals like performers and athletes to hide their incomes.

It will also soon improve the official receipt raffle promo, to provide more attractive prizes, focus the eligible receipts on hard-to-tax sectors like doctors and lawyers, and publicize the raffle more widely. It is also actively benchmarking the potential tax revenues from high tax-yield sectors; Ateneo has been actively assisting in this effort through its Economic Policy Reform and Advocacy (EPRA) project.

Thousands of fraudulent tax declarations have already been exposed and billions in additional revenues collected using such third-party information now being routinely obtained by the BIR, especially facilitated by better information and communications technology. There are clear indications that the BIR is catching up with tax evasion.

As April 17 approaches, errant taxpayers ought to beware: this time, the chances of being caught are much higher than before. *Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu*

Edsa rail project draws interest

By Daxim L. Lucas

FOUR FOREIGN AND ONE LOCAL BUSINESS groups are interested in bidding for the Edsa North Transit (ENT) project that will seamlessly link the Metro Rail Transit Line-3 and the Light Rail Transit Line-1.

According to a ranking transportation department official, the interested bidders included companies from Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Europe, and another from the Philippines.

"They have already sent us their notices of intent," Transportation Assistant Secretary Robert R. Castañares said in an interview.

However, he declined to identify the companies at this stage, saying that doing so would violate prevailing confidentiality agreements with the proponents.

The DOTC is now finalizing the design of the rail system that will link the Edsa-based MRT 3 with the older LRT 1 from North Avenue to Monumento in Caloocan City.

Recently, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said that up to $200 million would be needed to finance the project's civil works phase.

The ENT rail link will run for 7.5 kilometers from the North Avenue station to Roosevelt, Balintawak and Monumento.

Castañares, who chairs the department's bids and awards committee for the project, recently sent out an invitation to all prospective bidders to submit their respective letters of intent "to finance, design and construct" the rail link through a "solicited build-operate-transfer (BOT) scheme."

"The project will be implemented immediately after the Neda-ICC approval," Castañares said, referring to the National Economic and Development Authority's Cabinet-level Investment Coordination Committee clearing house.

MORGAN STANLEY TO EXPAND BUSINESS LINKS IN RP
Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila (left) welcomes Morgan Stanley vice president Gari Guglielmi (third from right) and legal counsel Justin Bonasia (second from right), who were in the country to evaluate an additional Philippine IT outsourcing service provider. The company has identified new global-sourcing opportunities with outsourcing interests in application support, quality assurance testing, infrastructure technology support and client/server Web-based development. Morgan Stanley is interested in the capabilities of the vendors in application development and support activities. Also at the meeting are Trade Undersecretary and Board of Investments managing head Elmer C. Hernandez (right).

Gov't allots extra ₱410B ...

From page B1

ongoing projects with existing revenue measures as well as measure the leeway for new programs.

Based on estimates from the National Economic and Development Authority, the country needs P1.1 trillion ($21.25 billion) in fresh investments from this year to 2010 to unclog infrastructure bottlenecks in transportation, power, water, communications and social safety nets.

Asked whether he was confident that the funds needed to fill the country's huge infrastructure backlog would be raised, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said: "Our problem is not financing. Our problem is choosing the right projects. If there are good projects, the financing will come."

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said the DBCC's approval of "allocable" project for the next three years meant that these identified expenditures would automatically be included in the annual budget to be submitted to Congress for each year.

"Our focus is really on infrastructure," he said.

Weak trading seen

From page B1

no major catalyst to drive share prices. With first-quarter earnings season not due till the end of the month, there is very little that can be considered as market moving," AB Capital Securities wrote in an investment note last Friday.

AB Capital also said resistance on the new main composite index is seen at the 2,250 level.

"Earnings growth will be hard pressed to duplicate the growth of recent years due to higher taxes. Another factor that could lead to some weakness in the short-term is the rising cost of oil and the growing longer term concern of peak oil. Crude oil prices soared to its highest in three-and-a-half months amid worries about possible supply disruptions. Mining stocks may benefit from the inflationary concerns as commodity prices continue to rise to record highs," AB Capital further wrote.

AB Capital said sentiment was driven by the rise in shares of PLDT to a new record high at P1,975 a share.

The surge in gold prices to $600 an ounce, a 25-year high, also pushed up stocks like Philex.

The Ayala group also kicked off with its series of annual stockholders' meetings for its group—Manila Water, Globe Telecom, Bank of the Philippine Islands and the parent firm Ayala Corp.

"While most of them failed to give specific indications of how the first quarter of the year went, the group in general was optimistic looking forward," AB Capital wrote. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

SM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Notice of Regular Annual Stockholders' Meeting

To all Stockholders:

Please take notice that the 2006 Annual Meeting of the stockholders of SM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION will be held on April 28, 2006 at 4:00 p.m. at the Makati A & B Room, Makati Shangri-la Hotel, Makati City. The proposed agenda of the meeting is set forth below:

AGENDA

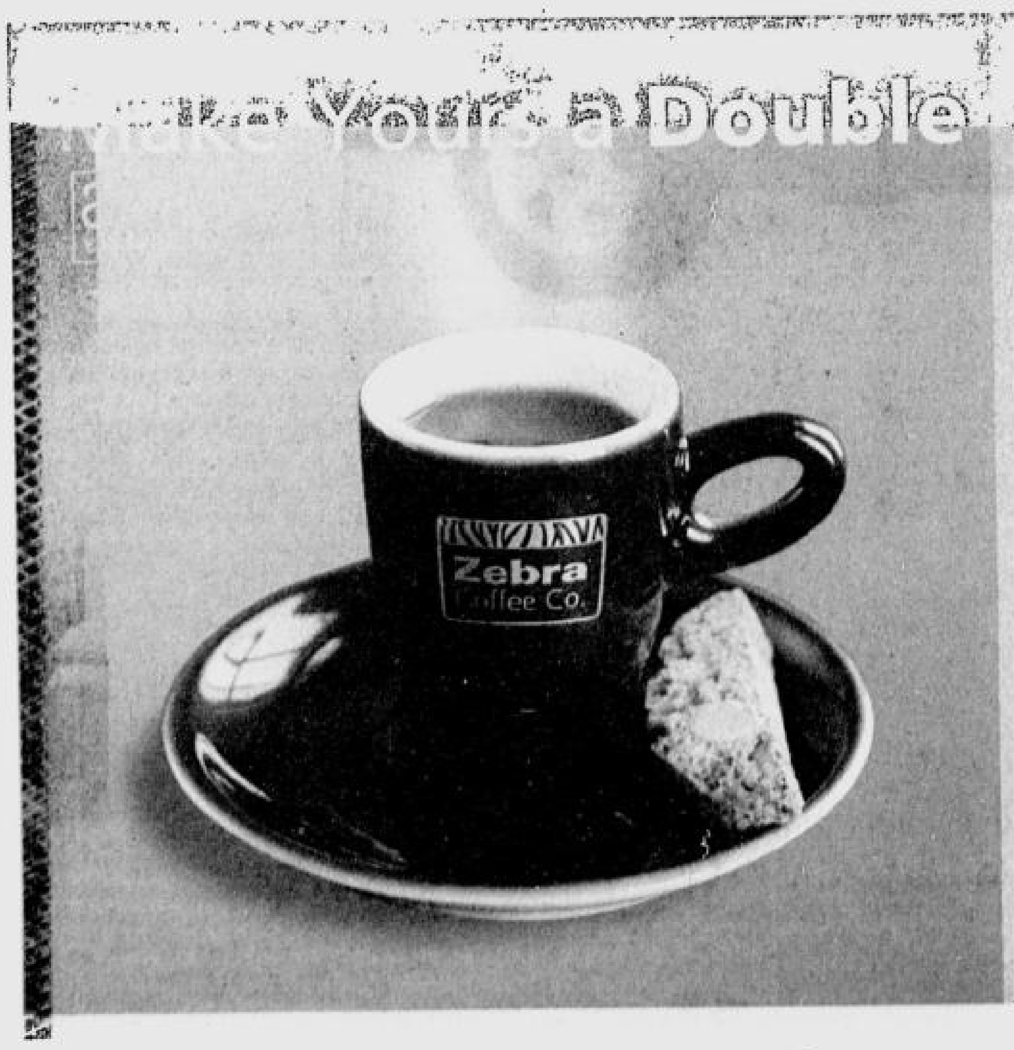
1. Call to order.
2. Certification of notice and quorum.
3. Approval of minutes of annual meeting of stockholders held on April 26,2005.
4. Annual Report.
5. General ratification of the acts of the Board of Directors and the management from the date of the last annual stockholders' meeting up to the date of this meeting.
6. Election of directors for 2006-2007.
7. Appointment of external auditors.
8. Other matters.
9. Adjournment.

The Board of Directors has fixed the end of trading hours of the Philippines Stock Exchange (PSE) on March 29, 2006 as the record date for the determination of stockholders entitled to notice of and to vote at such meeting and any adjournment thereof.

Makati City, March 8, 2006.

BY THE ORDER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
(Sgd.) EMMANUEL C. PARAS
Corporate Secretary

SM Corporate Offices, Bldg. A 1000 Bay Blvd., SM Central Business Park, Bay City, Pasay City
1300 Philippines Tel. No. 831-1000 Fax 833-6244



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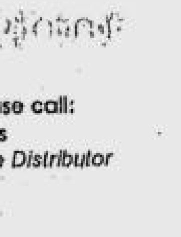

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Del Monte gravy

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

FOR ALLOWING SAN MIGUEL TO acquire majority control of Del Monte Pacific, the regional fruit, beverage and condiment company is returning the favor by farming out key business contracts to the Macondray Group of the Lorenzos.

Macondray this year is being given distribution rights for certain Del Monte-branded fruits and vegetable products imported from the United States and international affiliates, as well as the insurance business for Del Monte assets in the Philippines.

In addition, Macondray will also get to supply sugar, cattle feeder stock, fertilizers, other industrial/chemical products and the Macondray-produced plastic bags to Del Monte, as well as getting the rights to sell surplus fresh pineapple produced by the Del Monte Bukidnon plantation.

It was not immediately clear how much the related-party contracts Macondray would obtain from Del Monte now that fellow Filipinos San Miguel and Unilab heir Jose Campos Jr. have acquired majority control of the Singapore-listed company from the Italians.

According to the 2005 annual report, Del Monte sold $1.98 million of goods to Macondray, while buying more than $4.14 million from the Lorenzo companies in return.

Last year, Macondray also charged an undisclosed amount for "public relations services" to Del Monte, while at the same time getting Del Monte to sell "various food service products" to Pancake House, the listed restaurant businesses of the Lorenzos.

With San Miguel taking the captain's seat, San Miguel president Ramon Ang will also be entitled to an additional $22,500 (about P1.15 million, small beer, indeed) a year in remuneration as Del Monte Pacific chair, plus an undetermined number of shares in stock option.

The incoming executive director, most likely Del Monte Philippines COO Luis Alejandro, will receive an extra package of not less than Singapore $500,000 (more than P15.8 million) a year, plus stock options.

Greggy loses 156 hectares

MARCOS son-in-law Gregorio Araneta III has lost his claim to 156 hectares of land in Caloocan City to the national government.

Echoing an earlier Supreme Court decision, Caloocan City Regional Trial Court Judge Adoracion Angeles ruled that the disputed property under Araneta's Carmel Development Inc./Carmel Farms was part of the friar lands that were illegally seized under a 1973 Marcos decree for the benefit of the "Malacañang Homeowners Association."

The Supreme Court, in a January 1988 decision, ruled that the Marcos decree was unconstitutional and the subsequent titles to the disputed property null and void.

Nevertheless, the high court declared Carmel Farms "open for disposition and sale to the members of the Malacañang Homeowners Association" as it ordered the concerned government agencies "to do whatever is needful to restore the titles to full effect."

The Caloocan judge rejected Carmel Farms' defense that it was an "innocent purchaser of value," having failed to produce documents that the Aranetas had actually paid for the land, before or after the Marcos seizure.

Araneta, who was not yet married to Marcos daughter Irene when the late dictator ordered the seizure of Carmel Farms, said he was appealing the order, while filing an administrative case against the Caloocan judge.

Though adjoining, Carmel Farms is different from the 248-hectare Colinas Verdes, the golf course and subdivision in San Jose del Monte that Araneta Properties is jointly developing with the Sta. Lucia Group.

Carmel Development is registered as the 32.03-percent owner of the listed Araneta Properties, the former Inchrome mining venture.

The chair of Araneta Properties happens to be Benito "Bomboy" Araneta, who as nominal

COCKTALES/ B4

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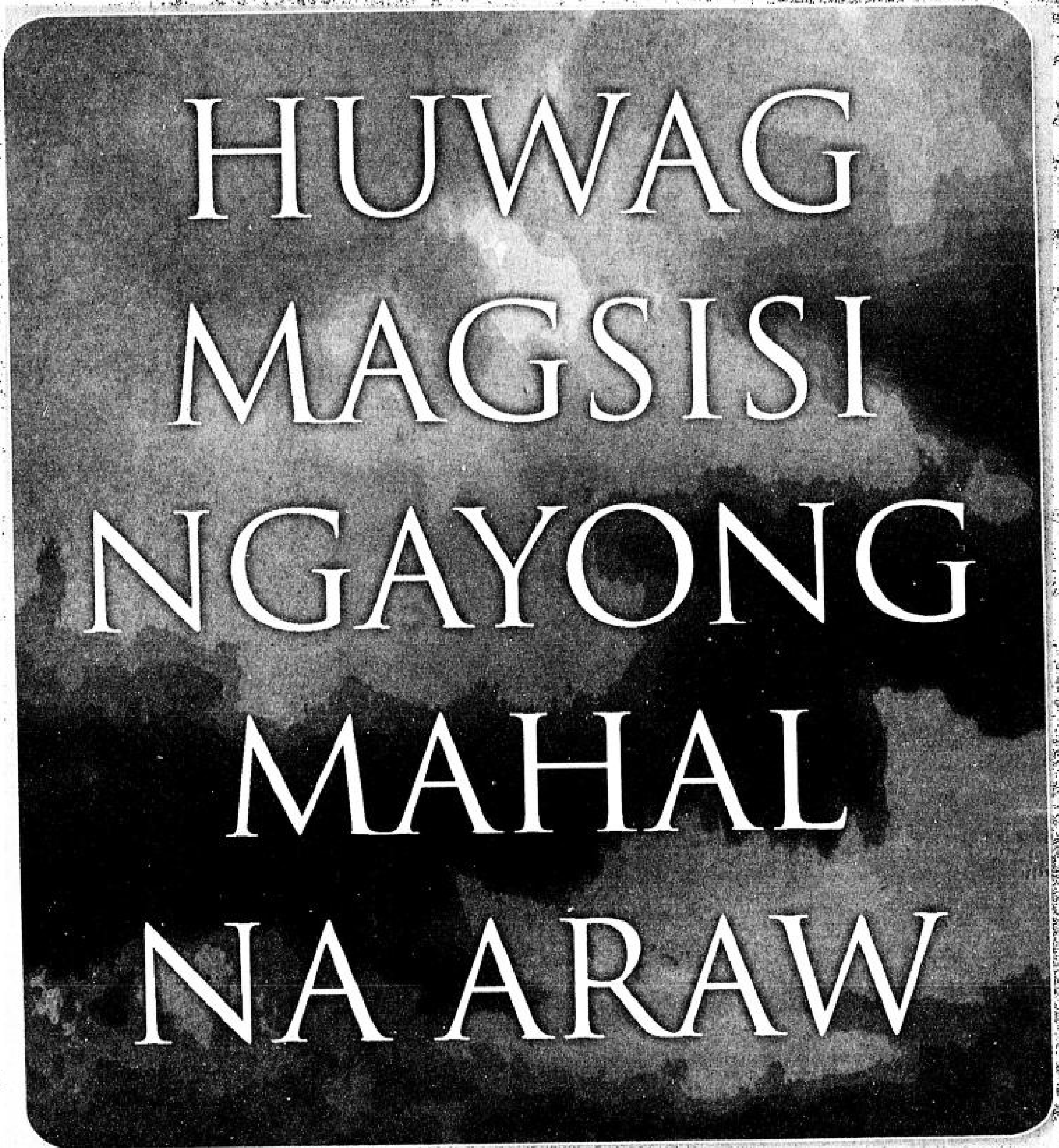

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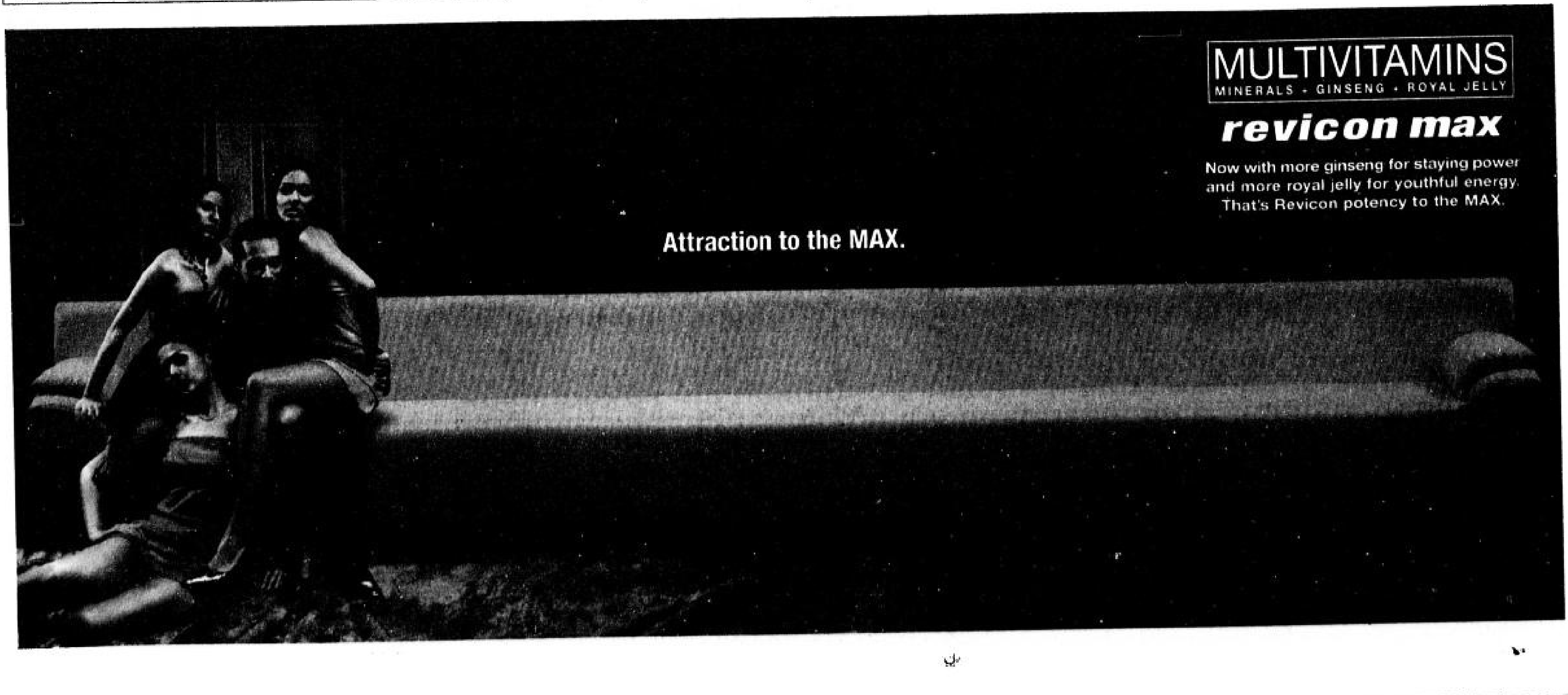

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RP firm to expand US, Asia ventures

Ayala unit looks at playing the role of property developer abroad

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SINGAPORE-BASED PROPERTY DEVELOPment firm Ayala International Pte. Ltd. is seeking pockets of growth in key burgeoning Asian cities and the soft property market in the United States, according to Ayala Corp. officials.

To fuel this growth, AIPL is planning to invest, through possible ventures, roughly $30 million to $40 million in Asian markets where it already has existing projects, like in Thailand, and new markets in China and India over the next few years, Ayala Corp. officials said, following the stockholders' meeting last Friday.

For the past three years, AIPL's investment commitment in the US reached $30 million as of end-2005, despite the weakening US residential property sector.

"In the US, we will begin to look at playing the role of developer," newly elected Ayala president Fernando Zobel de Ayala said.

Zobel stressed that Ayala has stayed away from high profile cities and, instead, looked at other areas of growth in the United States.

AIPL is involved in projects in Southern California, Salt Lake City in Utah, Phoenix in Arizona, and Kansas City in Missouri, among others.

AIPL is now bent on pursuing its residential development investments in the United States, in the face of a weakening market.

"The east and west coast markets are projected to weaken, but there are also a number of areas that are forecasted to grow," AIPL president Charles Cosgrove said in Ayala's annual report. "AIPL is fortunate that its current residential projects are in these areas of growth."

Cosgrove also told reporters that, with the growth of the economies of India and China, AIPL expects to take on possible retail and mixed-use projects in these markets, particularly in Shanghai, Beijing and key cities in India.

Cosgrove also said AIPL is exploring possible shopping mall developments or lifestyle centers in Shanghai, China and one or two cities in India.

No timetable was specified.

In Thailand, AIPL has a joint venture with the Narai Group, dubbed the "Nayara," a residential condominium project in Bangkok.

To expand this partnership, Nayara has acquired two properties in Bangkok for residential condominium development.

AIPL is also embarking on a new housing project near the new Thailand airport, which is expected to provide potential business for the company over the next five to seven years.

AIPL's net income last year hit $4.8 million, 32 percent lower than that of 2004, in the absence of one-time gains.

GSIS set to play waiting game for EPCIB shares

STATE-PENSION FUND GOVERNMENT Service Insurance System (GSIS) stressed that it is not willing to sell its 12.5-percent stake in Equitable PCI Bank below P92 a share.

GSIS chief operating officer Roy Joseph Rafols said that the pension fund can afford to wait until a better offer is made.

"We don't want to sell at a loss," Rafols said, following the Philippine Stock Exchange annual stockholders' meeting. "P92 is our acquisition cost."

According to industry sources, there are two "mystery buyers" who are willing to buy the Sy Group's 34-percent block in the country's third largest bank at P95 apiece.

The SM Group of mall tycoon Henry Sy last week said that no binding offer has yet been made on its 34-percent block in Equitable PCI Bank.

The SM Group issued the statement last week to clarify an earlier report that the mystery buyer of Equitable PCIBank had submitted a "formal binding" offer of P20.5 billion for the 34-percent block held by the SM group and Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

"To this day, we have not received a binding offer for our shares," SM Group chief financial officer Jose T. Sio said in a statement. "What was sent to us was a statement of interest only."

At the same time, SM Group lawyer Herrera Teehankee also sent a letter to Government Service Insurance System general manager Winston F. Garcia, informing him that "there is no binding offer to acquire the SM or Banco De Oro shares in Equitable PCI Bank from the Siguion Reyna law firm."

Siguion Reyna is the law firm representing an unknown buyer, and is the reported party communicating with Garcia on the SM shares.

In a letter dated March 31 to Garcia, signed by Siguion Reyna partner Rolando Mario G. Villonco, the law firm made it clear that its letter on the SM shares "shall constitute a statement of interest only," adding that it is also subject to several conditions.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Cocktales

From page B3

chair of another listed company, Philcomsat Holdings, funneled P390 million of other shareholders' money into another company controlled by another cousin, Antonio Araneta.

Another Araneta, Carlos of LBC Bank, sits as finance director, and is being sued all the way in Delaware by ATR-Kim Eng for a multimillion-peso botched venture.

But, that, as they say, is another story.

Heard through the grapevine

THUNDERBIRD Resorts, chaired by former Finance Secretary Roberto de Ocampo, will for the third time attempt to open its Poro Point hotel-and-casino venture later this month.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 7, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36.5	36.5	35.5	35.5	164,100
Bank of the Phil. Islands	62	62	62	62	1,578,500
China Banking Corp.	725	730	725	725	650
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	17.5	19	1,500
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.46	0.47	0.46	0.47	2,770,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	71	71.5	69.5	71.5	481,100
International Exch. Bank	33	33	32.5	32.5	4,300
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	38.5	38.5	38	38.5	1,558,000
Philippine National Bank	34.5	35	34	34	11,000
Phil. Savings Bank	39	40	39	40	5,600
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	29,800
Security Bank Corp.	47	47.5	46	47.5	69,300
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	200,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	1,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	28	28	28	28	10,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3230	3240	3230	3240	1,500
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1	1	0.99	0.99	50,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	175	185	175	185	10,910
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2170	2170	2170	2170	190
Ivantage Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.04	5,409,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	44	44	43	44	150,600
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	45.5	46.5	45.5	46.5	1,345,900
Manila Electric Co. A	14.5	14.5	14	14	13,500
Manila Electric Co. B	21.25	21.5	21.25	21.5	160,600
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.3	10,144,000
Petron Corp.	4.5	4.55	4.4	4.45	14,850,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	80,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.55	3.55	3.55	3.55	1,000
CADP Group Corp.	2	2	2	2	20,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	19.5	19.5	19.5	19.5	352,400
Jollibee Foods Corp.	37	37	36	36.5	128,700
Pancake House Inc.	4.05	4.05	4.05	4.05	13,000
RFM Corp.	0.7	0.73	0.7	0.71	11,370,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.7	2.75	2.7	2.75	108,000
San Miguel Corp. A	60	60.5	60	60	99,500
San Miguel Corp. B	80.5	80.5	79	79	105,600
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	192,200
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.32	4,230,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.56	1.58	1.52	1.58	3,722,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.35	4.5	4.35	4.5	1,120,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.0675	0.0675	0.0675	0.0675	2,000,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	121,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.008	0.009	0.008	0.009	8,000,000
Ayala Corp.	355	365	350	350	643,790
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	80,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.2	5.8	5.2	5.7	4,801,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	1,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	100,000
APC Group Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	2,000,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	27,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.85	0.86	0.85	0.86	300,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.7	9	8.7	8.7	42,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1	1	1	1	5,130,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.55	945,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	2.85	2.95	2.85	2.95	294,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.34	60,000
Medco Holdings	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	100,000
Pacifica	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	5,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	2,300,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	65,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	1,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	3,450,000
SM Investments Corp.	227	228	223	227	1,083,080
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	100,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	11	11.25	11	11.25	3,458,700
Belle Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	6,984,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.91	0.91	100,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	650,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.84	1.84	1.82	1.82	780,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.66	1.7	1.66	1.66	22,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	1,050,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	60,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.66	0.67	0.65	0.66	4,560,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	1,000,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.34	1.36	1.34	1.34	4,372,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	200,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	400,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.54	0.55	1,310,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	200,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.27	0.28	43,160,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.25	0.28	0.25	0.27	3,480,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	15,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.29	0.29	0.26	0.27	2,730,000
SM Development Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.6	1.6	160,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.8	2,198,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	11,090,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.25	12.25	12.25	12.25	35,600
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	3,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.99	0.99	0.98	0.99	760,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	885	885	870	870	23,560
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.05	3.05	3	3.05	1,299,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1970	1975	1960	1975	19,750
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.185	0.19	0.185	0.19	550,000
Imperial Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	14,000,000
Ionics Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	5,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	3,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	200,000
Philweb Corp.	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.024	30,600,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	2.5	2.5	2.48	2.48	357,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	12.5	12.5	12.25	12.5	641,500
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	1,698,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.74	1.8	1.74	1.76	556,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.3	1,430,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45	70,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	75,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.72	1.86	1.72	1.74	59,000
Paxys Inc.	9.4	9.4	9.2	9.3	111,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.44	1.5	1.44	1.44	2,351,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.5	1.52	1.48	1.5	707,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	507,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	1,155,000
Benguet Corp. A	8.2	8.5	8.2	8.3	130,000
Benguet Corp. B	25	25	25	25	800
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.52	1.64	1.52	1.64	523,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.27	0.29	0.26	0.28	83,150,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.32	29,750,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.021	0.021	0.02	0.021	170,400,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.03	0.03	0.029	0.03	57,100,000
Omico Corp.	0.007	0.0075	0.0065	0.0065	1,582,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	3	3.15	3	3.05	11,162,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	3.05	3.15	3	3.1	13,337,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	28	28	27	27.5	621,300
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.36	1,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	880,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.245	0.245	800,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	32,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	10,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.53	0.53	0.52	0.52	100,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.52	0.52	0.51	0.51	250,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.8	3.85	3.8	3.8	197,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series N	10.5	11	10.5	11	400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	11	11	11	11	900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	11	11	11	11	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series U	11	11	11	11	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	11	11	11	11	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	11	11	11	11	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	11	11	11	11	1,000
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	11	11	11	11.	100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	12.75	13	12.5	12.5	481,500

CURRENCIES

April 9, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.817661	1.000000	51.1190
Japan	Yen	0.006949	0.008499	0.4345
United Kingdom	Pound	1.433197	1.752800	89.6014
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.105387	0.128888	6.5886
Switzerland	Franc	0.633944	0.775314	39.6333
Canada	Dollar	0.709406	0.867604	44.3510
Singapore	Dollar	0.508876	0.622355	31.8142
Australia	Dollar	0.597400	0.730620	37.3486
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.169324	2.653083	135.6229
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.218031	0.266652	13.6310
Brunei	Dollar	0.507297	0.620424	31.7155
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000091	0.000111	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.021405	0.026178	1.3382
UAE	Dirham	0.222626	0.272272	13.9183
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.223000	62.5185
Argentina	Peso	0.265906	0.325203	16.6241
Brazil	Real	0.383608	0.469153	23.9826
Denmark	Kroner	0.134014	0.163899	8.3784
India	Rupee	0.018379	0.022477	1.1490
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.223039	0.272777	13.9441
Mexico	New Peso	0.073697	0.090131	4.6074
New Zealand	Dollar	0.502867	0.615006	31.4385
Norway	Kroner	0.126603	0.154835	7.9150
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013650	0.016694	0.8534
South Africa	Rand	0.135318	0.165494	8.4599
Korea	Won	0.000858	0.001049	0.0536
Sweden	Kroner	0.107222	0.131132	6.7033
Syria	Pound	0.015751	0.019264	0.9848
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025319	0.030965	1.5829
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000381	0.000466	0.0238

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,100,000	1,050,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	1,200,000	1,050,000
Anvaya Cove Beach and Nature Club	Please Call	-
Baguio Country Club	Please Call	500,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	40,000	-
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	100,000	-
Camp John Hay	200,000	170,000
Canlubang	500,000	400,000
Capitol Hills	60,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,500,000	1,350,000
Celebrity Sports Club	100,000	90,000
Club Filipino	100,000	-
Eagleridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	-
Forest Hills "A"	100,000	-
Forest Hills "B"	200,000	150,000
Forest Hills "C"	200,000	-
Makati Sports Club "A"	180,000	160,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	250,000	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	11,500,000
Manila Golf (Individual)	-	11,000,000
Manila Polo	2,300,000	2,250,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	340,000	300,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	Please Call	600,000
Manila Yacht Club	350,000	200,000
Mimosa (Individual)	220,000	160,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	-	450,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	250,000	200,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	350,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "A"	180,000	140,000
Orchard Golf Club "B"	370,000	325,000
Orchard Golf Club "C"	380,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	160,000	125,000
Spa & Lodge	450,000	400,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,200,000	1,100,000
Sta. Elena "B"	1,600,000	1,500,000
[illegible] Golf	200,000	-
Tagaytay Country Club	330,000	300,000
Tagaytay Highlands	680,000	600,000
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	600,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	90,000	-
Valle Verde (Corporate)	200,000	160,000
Valley Golf	230,000	180,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	6,300,000	6,175,000

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club A/B*	1,100,000/1,200,000*	Pls Call
Alta Vista B/Corp.*	-	Pls. Call/300,000*
Baguio Country Club	-	500,000
Camp John Hay	-	Pls Call
Canlubang Golf	500,000	Pls. Call
Canyon Woods	120,000	-
Capitol Hills	60,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,500,000	1,350,000
Celebrity Sports	120,000	100,000
City Sports Club Cebu	-	380,000
Club Filipino	110,000	-
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	330,000*/380,000**	150,000/Pls. Call*
Eastridge A/B*	Pls. Call	-
Evercrest	65,000	-
Fairways & Bluewater	Pls. Call	Pls Call
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	120,000/200,000*	150,000*
Luisita Golf	Pls. Call	300,000
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls. Call	11,500,000
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	11,000,000
Manila Polo	Pls. Call	2,275,000
Manila Southwoods A/B*	350,000/Pls. Call*	300,000/700,000*
Makati Sports Club	180,000	160,000
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	350,000	250,000
Metropolitan Club A/B*	180,000	100,000
Mimosa Ind./C2*/C3**	Pls. Call	150,000/300,000*/400,000**
Mt. Malarayat A	230,000	-
Orchard A/B*/C**	180,000/Pls. Call*/400,000**	150,000
Punta Fuego	400,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	160,000	Pls Call
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	90,000/150,000*/250,000**	130,000*
Rockwell Leisure Club	Pls. Call	180,000
Royale Tagaytay CC	80,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/150,000**	80,000*
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	Pls. Call	1,100,000/1,550,000*
The Palms Country Club	550,000	350,000
Tagaytay Country Club	330,000	310,000
Tagaytay Highlands	680,000	-
Tagaytay Midlands	Pls. Call	600,000
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Tower Club	140,000	-
Valley Golf	210,000	-
Valle Verde Ind.	100,000	-
Wack Wack Golf	6,350,000	6,175,000

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Equitable sees 30% income growth in '06

By Christine A. Gaylican

EQUITABLE PCI BANK IS TARGETING to grow its net income by 30 percent this year by doubling efforts to boost its middle market business lending and consumer loan operations, sources said.

Bank sources said this year would be a catching up year for Equitable-PCI Bank after being side-tracked by merger issues involving Banco de Oro Universal Bank in 2005, the sources said Friday.

To further ease the pressure on the bank's financial standing, bank officials are considering selling treasury shares equivalent to a 10.5-percent equity in the bank.

This option, explained by sources, would allow the bank to comply with the new accounting standards' capital build-up requirement.

Sources explained that these shares, based on the current book value of P95 per share, could easily generate P7 billion for the bank.

Last year, Banco de Oro offered to merge with Equitable PCI to create the second or third largest bank in the country with combined assets of P500 billion.

Banco de Oro is currently the sixth largest bank in terms of assets, now worth P212.3 billion. It is the eighth largest in terms of capital.

Under the proposed merger terms, Banco de Oro will swap 1.6 common shares for every one common share of Equitable PCI.

However, the Equitable PCI board rejected the offer.

The SM Group owns 34 percent of Equitable PCIB; state funds Social Security System and Government Service Insurance system own 29 percent and 12 percent, respectively; the Romualdezes, 8 percent, and the rest is held by the public.

Auto parts exporters to tap China

Market big enough for more suppliers

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING steps to enable the local automotive industry to tap the vast Chinese market, especially in the light of ongoing efforts to establish a free trade arrangement between Southeast Asia and China.

According to a trade official, local automotive companies were engaged in initial talks with at least four companies operating in China.

The official said the local companies were looking at the possibility of exporting automotive parts and components to China.

"While the vehicle manufacturing industry in China is generally supplied with parts and components made there, the market is still big enough to present opportunities for foreign suppliers, including our local manufacturers," the source said.

He said that trade with China of non-agricultural commodities would give "greater meaning" to the envisioned Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)-China free trade area.

The 10 Asean economies, including the Philippines, are currently implementing an Early Harvest Program that covers varying numbers of agricultural tariff lines.

The other Asean members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Laos, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The EHP is a preliminary arrangement between China and the Asean that paves the way for a free trade regime by 2010.

The EHP gives Asean members an advance low-tariff entry before the free trade agreement takes effect on condition that Asean markets be opened to Chinese products.

Taking effect at the start of 2005, the Philippine-China EHP covers 209 tariff lines that include plant, animal and marine products.

The EHP lists the following specific products: refined but not chemically modified copra, palm kernel or babassu oil; crude oil and refined oil products; cocoa powder, with and without added sugar or other sweetening matter; and cane, osier, bamboo or similar material.

The Philippines is the last Asean member to enter China's EHP. The others have done so as early as 2004 and have cut tariffs on covered products to between 2 percent and 15 percent. These countries and China have agreed to remove such tariffs in 2006.

FirstGen posts profit increase

FIRST GEN CORP. POSTED A 2005 NET INcome of $87.115 million, up 1 percent from $86.252 million in 2004.

This was attributed to the solid performance of First Gen's two main projects—the 1,000-megawatt (MW) Santa Rita and the 500-MW San Lorenzo natural gas-fired power plants—and the favorable judgment in the arbitration case (Tranche 2) between First Gas and Santa Rita's engineering procurement contractor, Siemens.

"We are pleased that Santa Rita and San Lorenzo continue to operate efficiently and deliver value to the company, providing the launching pad to First Gen's growth aspirations. Bauang Private Power, where we have a 37-percent effective stake, also continues to do well," First Gen vice chair and CEO Peter D. Garrucho Jr. said.

First Gen's consolidated revenue rose to $827.74 million, up 25 percent from $661.53 million in 2004. The increase was due to the increase in the plants' net dependable capacity (NDC), improved dispatch and higher fuel prices.

The NDC of Santa Rita increased from 996 MW in 2004 to 1,000 MW in 2005, and from 502 MW to 503 MW for San Lorenzo. Dispatch was also significantly higher in 2005 with both plants averaging 77 percent compared to the previous year's 65 percent and 58 percent.

Security Bank declares dividend of 75¢/share

THE SECURITY BANK BOARD has approved the declaration of a P0.75 cash dividend per share payable upon the approval of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The dividend consists of a regular cash dividend amounting to P0.25 per share and a P0.50 per share special cash dividend.

The P0.75 in dividend represents a 50-percent increase from the semestral dividends declared and paid in 2005. This translates to an annualized dividend yield of 4.4 percent based on the average share price in the last six months.

Security Bank has progressively improved its cash dividend declarations since 2002, alongside its efforts to build a sustainable earnings base for the bank.

Its after-tax earnings for 2005 reached P1.155 billion, a 50-percent growth over the previous year's restated earnings of P769 million. Earnings over the past two years have proven quite robust and have increased at a compound annual growth rate of 50 percent. Earnings per share improved to P3.50 from the previous year's P2.30 per share.

Security Bank's nonperforming loans (NPL) ratio stood at 6.1 percent and its NPL cover increased to 136 percent.

The solid earnings performance and its emphasis on asset quality have bolstered the bank's financial strength resulting in a capital adequacy ratio of 14.4 percent as of end-2005, after full compliance with the International Accounting Standards.

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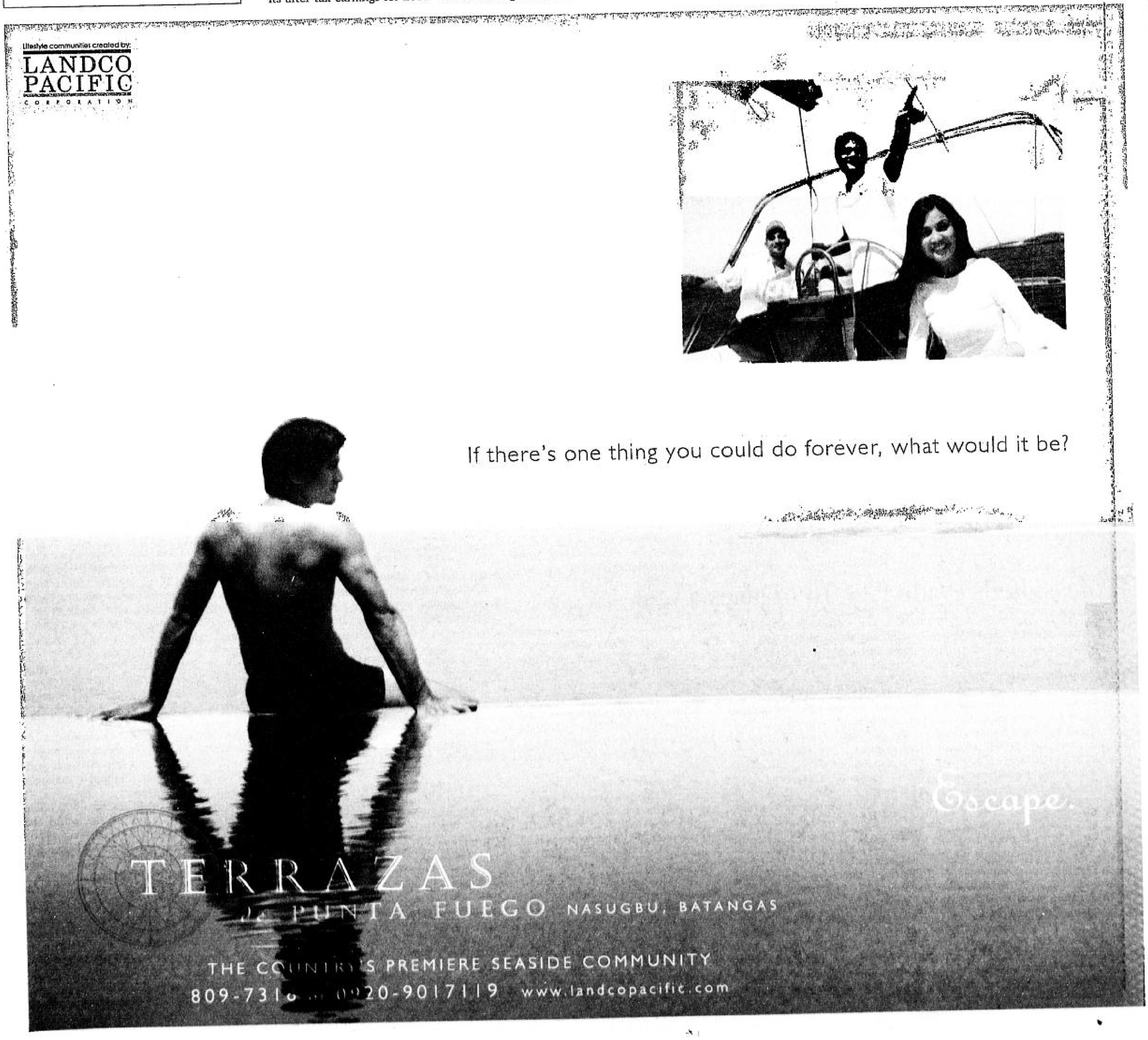
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Calaca bidders given up to April 27 to submit offers

Asset comes with supply contract for 83MW, says PSALM

By Abigail L. Ho

THE POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) has given potential bidders for the 600-megawatt (MW) Calaca coal-fired power generation facility until April 27 to submit their bids. PSALM vice president for asset management and electricity trading Froilan Tampinco said the government privatization agency had already released the final transaction documents to the prospective bidders. These documents, which contained the land lease and asset purchase agreements for the power plant, are part of the legal component that bidders have to submit together with their financial offers.

When PSALM issued the Calaca bid invitation in August last year, four investor groups submitted their letters of interest to participate in the public bidding for the asset, the government agency said.

Tampinco said that while PSALM would still be selling the Calaca plant as a merchant plant, it already had attached to it a supply contract equivalent to 83 MW, giving the prospective owner an assured market for the power that would be produced by the plant.

"The new owner will only have to look for additional markets and negotiate for its own bilateral contracts with either distributors or big electricity consumers," he said.

The Calaca plant was first placed on the auction block in late June 2005, but the bidding was cancelled when only one of the three expected bidders submitted an offer. The lone bidder was First Gen Luzon Power Corp.

The two other prospective bidders, Japanese firm Mitsui & Co. Ltd. And Filipino-Malaysian Phil-Mal Petroenergy Corp., backed out shortly before the deadline.

PSALM then scheduled a second bidding for the plant in October, but this did not push through. another acution was set for Nov. 10 but this, too, did not push through.

Tampinco admitted then that prospective investors were discouraged by the status of Calaca as a merchant plant with no fixed power supply contracts.

Bangko Sentral OKs Brady bonds buyback plan

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS HAS approved the national government's plan to buy back portion of the $774 million worth of its outstanding Brady bonds using proceeds from domestic borrowings.

Government sources said the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board had given the imprimatur to retire these expensive bonds following a referendum recently conducted among board members.

However, the majority of the Monetary Board members voted to retire only portion of the $774 million worth of outstanding bonds to minimize the impact of the buyback on the country's foreign exchange reserves.

The sources said that while the buyback would free up underlying collateral, consisting of zero-coupon US treasury bonds, the amount that would be available might reach only $400 million assuming the entire $774 million was retired.

As such, the sources said there would still be some foreign outflows as the government would still have to buy foreign exchange from the BSP to retire the Brady bonds.

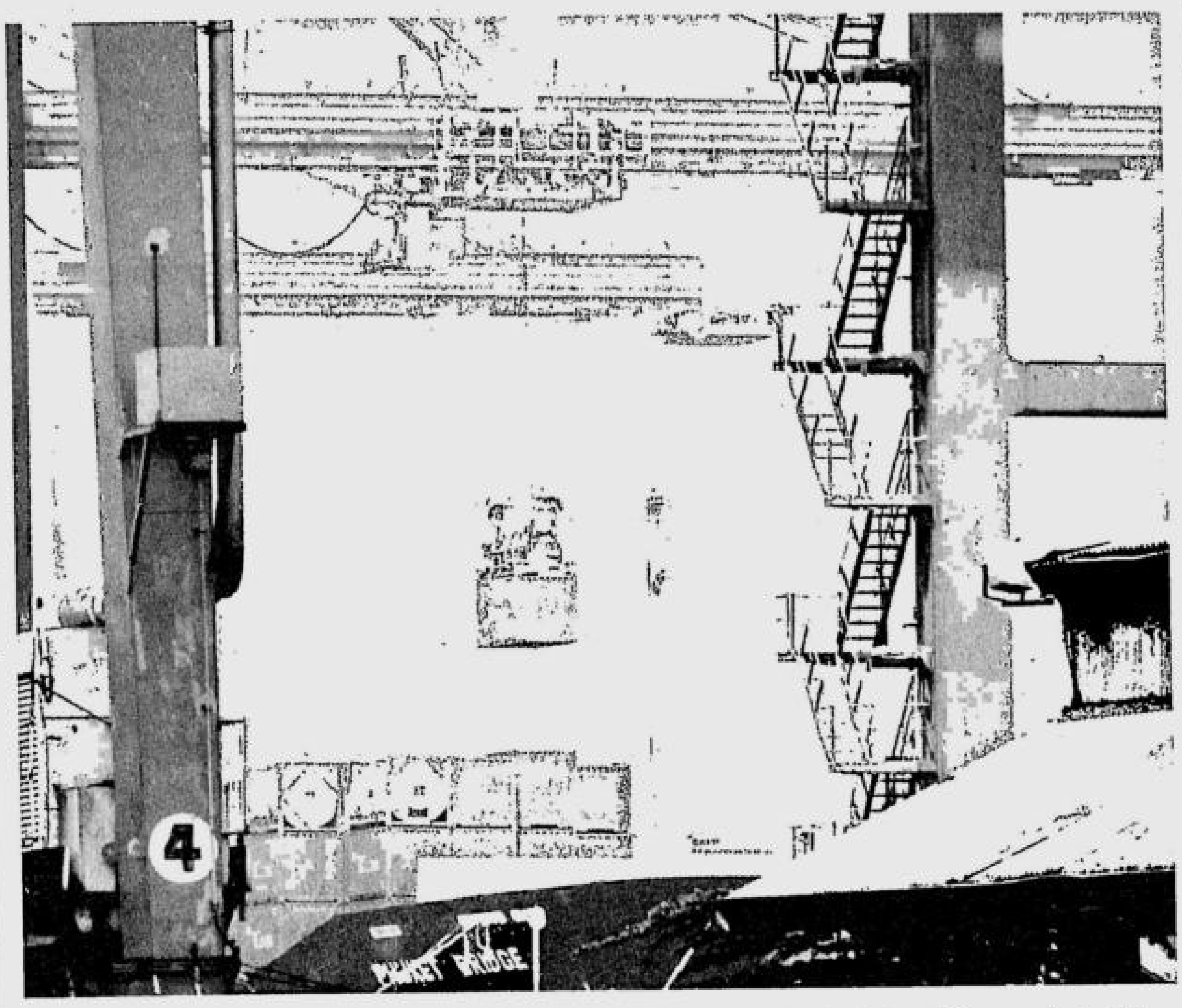
The Monetary Board also backed National Treasurer Omar Cruz' proposal to tap the domestic market to buy back the Brady bonds to take advantage of the strong peso.

The buyback will thus be refinanced by the government with local bond issuance instead of the foreign bond float. This is in line with the thrust to reduce reliance on external debts.

The Brady bonds have call options at different dates and Cruz had said the call exercise would depend on various factors such as the value of foreign debts outstanding, net present value of savings from debt servicing as well as the possibility of refinancing it at a lower cost.

The call option gives an issuer the right (but not the obligation) to buy back the bonds within a specific time period. It profits on a call when the price of the underlying asset increases.

The Philippines issued a total of $4.25 billion worth of Brady bonds between 1990 and 1992 under a debt restructuring program. Some of the bonds had been retired in the past years through bond exchange programs. The bulk of the country's remaining Brady bonds will mature in 2017 and 2018 but some are falling due in the next three years.



THE PHILIPPINE export industry is expecting a boost from the recovery of major industrial economies in the region. The Philippines-based Asian Development Bank said Asia's economic growth is to remain at a robust 7.0 percent or more in 2006 and 2007 despite high oil prices. AFP

UMC to launch 8 new Nissan CV, SUV models

By Ronnel W. Domingo

UNIVERSAL MOTORS CORP., distributor of Nissan commercial vehicles in the country, is launching eight new models in the next few years as part of a package bundled by Nissan Motor Co. Ltd. specifically for the Philippine market.

UMC senior vice president Elizabeth H. Lee said the package, which was contained in Nissan's five-year plan, was made up of five entirely new product lines and three replacement vehicles.

"These include a good mix of full sports utility vehicles, multipurpose vehicles or crossover, vans and mini-vans as well as pick-up trucks," Lee said.

She explained that worldwide, Nissan would introduce a total of 28 new models between this year and 2010.

This is a significant change in Nissan's tack as only a few of the 40 models introduced globally in the past years ever reached the Philippine market, Lee added.

She said Nissan's new five-year plan was "more robust, more optimistic" than the last one as the company was now looking at markets outside the United States and Japan for growth.

In the past, Lee said the vehicle firm focused on the United States and Japan, being the largest markets that had the promise of large sales volumes and thus had the greatest potential to give the firm the chance to rebuilt its financial and capital base.

This time around, under Nissan's global "Shift" campaign, Lee said new and additional model line-ups for the benefit of the Philippine market would be introduced.

Current models distributed by UMC include the Patrol SUVs, the Frontier pick ups and the Urvan.

"Nissan also plans to adopt a more efficient sourcing strategy in (Southeast Asia) and globally to maximize growth opportunities and minimize costs as the Nissan business activities grow," the official said.

Lee said that UMC had actually made a headway with its Shift campaign when it launched last month its "Ur Van Ur Business" promotion, aimed at increasing the market for its Nissan Urvan.

She said the promo was aimed at helping people explore their options on ways to earn additional income and provide their families an improved life. "It's like teaching people how to fish instead of just giving them fish."

Lee explained that UMC was suggesting several business possibilities that people could engaged in using the Urvan which comes in 12-seater, 15-seater and 18-seater variants.

She said the vehicle could be used for school or general shuttle services; vehicle for rent or hire; ambulance and cargo delivery.

In this promo, the Urvan, which costs about P1.19 million, would be sold with a down payment of 20 percent or about P200,000.

The idea is that the rest of the amount would be paid out using the income derived from the businesses that buyers would go into.

European vehicle maker upbeat on flex-fuel cars

AUTOMOTIVE GIANT DAIMLER-Chrysler has expressed optimism that vehicles than run on alternative fuels would be used significantly in developing countries like the Philippines, where it just brought its "sustainable mobility" campaign.

With the help of local affiliate CATS Motors Inc., Daimler-Chrysler hosted a two-day forum dubbed "Visions and Innovations" that featured the company's latest technological innovations in their car models.

The forum focused on alternative drive systems, alternative fuels, fuel cells and the firm's *abaca* project in the Philippines.

It brought to the Philippines one of its 60 fuel cell-fueled sedans, which formed part of the company's fleet of 100 fuel cell vehicles. These also included 36 buses and four delivery or light-duty vehicles.

Peter Froeschle, a senior manager in charge of energy projects, said Daimler-Chrysler first introduced fuel cell vehicles for practical use in 2003 after almost a decade of preparatory work.

Froeschle said the units were being used as service vehicles for personnel and VIPs under a comprehensive program to test them prior to mass production.

He said most of the fuel cell cars were in the United States, the buses were in Europe, and the rest were in China, Australia, Japan and Singapore.

"We hope to develop the second-generation models by 2009 or 2010," Froeschle said. "After further practical tests, we plan to roll out third-generation models by 2015, which would be for the mass market."

The official said the company had been investing in research and development on alternative fuels since the first global oil shock in the 1970s.

"We are doing this because we do not want the day to come when we can no longer sell vehicles because the cost of fuel is prohibitive," Froeschle said. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

Professionals evade P25.5B in taxes a year

From page B1

the study acknowledged that the policy and administration reforms put in place in the last two years were "convincing indications that serious reforms can produce encouraging results."

On the side of indirect taxes, the WB study said the inefficiency of the tax system particularly of the value-added tax was "endemic" as VAT efficiency—calculated as the share of total VAT collection to gross domestic product divided by the VAT rate—yielded an efficiency ratio of about 35 percent annually over the last decade.

Until last November when it started the VAT reform program after many legal roadblocks, the Philippines maintained a large set of exemptions that significantly reduced the tax base notwithstanding poor compliance on the issuance of VAT receipts. But with the expanded VAT program, the government aims to bring up the VAT efficiency ratio to 70 percent.

"On an administration point of view, VAT registration of businesses relative to the size of the economy is very low and the probability of being audited is insignificant at 2 percent," it said.

The study said the inefficiency was also systemic in excise taxes, noting that the use of a specific tax on "sin" products based on volume was substantially eroding real tax receipts and collection efficiency.

Overall, the WB study said tax buoyancy—which measures the change in tax revenue due to the combined change in income and policy such as rate increases, removal of exemptions and introduction of new taxes—suggests that recent tax reforms and administration efforts had been "lackluster."

Given these structural problems, the following initiatives were proposed for the Bureau of Internal Revenue:

- Clean up the taxpayer register and continue the tax-mapping program to increase registration and filing using trained personnel other than examiners to undertake routine registration checks.
- Strengthen the large taxpayers unit, review the criteria used for the selection of large taxpayer cases for audit and review the content of the audit manual to ensure that risk-based approaches are used both in the selection of the cases and in the identification of issues to be audited.
- Develop and implement a 2006 national audit plan that provides a broad coverage of the taxpayer population while focusing on major compliance risks.
- Improve compliance on issuance of receipts, strengthen third-party information linkages, develop a comprehensive tax education and service programs for citizens, and the consolidation of various tax laws and regulations into one code.

The WB also urged the Bureau of Customs to develop management control techniques and apply real risk management to ensure that scarce resources are used where the risk of revenue evasion are greatest.

"Tighten the management of warehouse imports that are a source of substantial revenue leaks," the study said.

Doris C. Dumlao

Will a unicameral parliament save us?

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

NOT BEING A LAWYER, I WILL STAY AWAY from the legal and constitutional issues on the people's initiative.

The initiative opens a new front in the drive towards a shift to a parliamentary form of government. The Sigaw ng Bayan movement fired the first shot with newspaper ads that pushed for a unicameral parliament.

Sigaw echoes the line of all proponents of the parliamentary system. Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are governed by parliaments and are more prosperous than the Philippines. Ergo, if we shift to a parliamentary system, we should, magically, be as prosperous as our neighbors.

If we are not as prosperous as our neighbors, it is because our economic policies for the past three quarters of a century have been short-sighted, inward looking and self-destructive.

Before World War II, Quezon decided that, to jump start industrialization, the government would engage in businesses that the private sector was scared to get into. The National Development Co. was organized. It put up the first cotton-spinning mill.

The culture that it is okay for a government corporation to lose money—it's only taxpayers' money, anyway—prevails to this day. There are now over 300 government corporations losing a total of almost P50 billion a year.

After the devastation of World War II, with rampant unemployment, the government decided to encourage labor-intensive enterprises, such as cigar-rolling, embroideries, garment making. Even the barrio folks were hired to cut the grass by the roadsides on weekends. There were plenty of jobs but very little productivity.

To save our scarce dollars, the government embarked on a policy of import substitution. We would not import anything that we could produce ourselves. We put up inefficient plants churning out products sold at atrociously high prices. To drum up sales, the "Buy Filipino" policy was established. Protectionism reared its ugly head.

To encourage investments, the government granted tax holidays to hundreds of infant industries. Fifty years later these babies are still in their cribs.

The Board of Investments was organized to decide how many investors could go into a specific area. The BOI ended up establishing cartels. For example, it was decided that, instead of importing flour, we should import wheat and mill it into flour. Based on the market demand, the BOI computed the maximum number of flour mills that should be built. This created the flour mill cartel. Today, all sorts of cartels shackle the country.

The Philippines is a charter member of GATT-WTO. But we went around its rules meant to promote trade and cut consumer prices. We keep cement prices high by charging a safeguard duty on Taiwan cement. We also slap a ridiculous 40 percent safeguard duty on Thai chicken legs.

To make matters really worse, we squandered our vast natural wealth.

Before World War II, abaca fiber (the abaca plant is indigenous to the Philippines) brought in as much as 30 percent of our dollar earnings. There was a huge plantation in Davao. After the war, the government confiscated the Japanese-owned plantation, and distributed it to our veterans. It was the first agrarian reform program. Fiber production plummeted. The abaca industry has never recovered.

The Philippines is blessed with enormous mineral resources. The mining industry, at the height of its boom, accounted for 25 percent of the GDP. Then, mining was seen as a threat to the environment. Today, mining's share of the GDP is down to one and a half percent.

Sugar was a huge dollar earner. Under the Laurel-Langley agreement, the US bought our sugar at preferential prices, but only up to 1974. We should have prepared to compete globally afterwards. But the industry never modernized, and the planters got hopelessly mired in debt. Today, we import sugar.

Philippine mahogany exports were a top dollar earner from the 1950s on. We denuded our forests. Then, the reforestation program failed. Today, to keep our plywood factories humming, we import Philippine mahogany from Indonesia.

We had more coconut trees—500 million of them—than the rest of the world combined. In the 1960's the government decided that, instead of copra, we should export the higher-value coconut oil. But the mills were put up at the expense of the farmer.

Then, Marcos imposed the infamous coconut levy, which was meant to transform the farmers into stockholders of the mills. Ten billion pesos were extracted from the farmers. They have never benefited from the levy. Today, why should the farmer replace his aging coconut trees?

Now, will someone explain how a unicameral parliament can save us from the plague that has afflicted us for over a quarter of a century?

Benguet Corp. sees brighter prospects ahead

By Christine A. Gaylican

LISTED FIRM BENGUET CORP. EXPECTS TO sustain its gains in 2006, announcing that its mining, water and land development projects are well in the advanced stages, while the firm's officials are hoping to close a number of deals with potential project partners, by yearend, a company official said.

Reversing its losses in 2005, Benguet Corp. hopes to remain in the black this year as it proceeds with the development of its diversified interests, including the Kingking copper-gold prospect, the Sta. Cruz nickel property, the Surigao coal prospect and the Baguio water supply project, company president Benjamin Philip G. Romualdez said on Friday.

"After several years of losses until 2004, Benguet Corp. has made a turnaround in 2005 with a P52-million income, and we hope to continue the momentum this year," Romualdez said.

He noted during last week's annual stockholders meeting that the improved business climate in the Philippine mining sector and the prevailing high metal prices in the world market would bring about brighter prospects for the company.

The price of gold last week went up to a high of $600 per ounce in New York, while copper prices were pegged at $2.50 per gram.

Benguet has engaged the services of financial advisers Citigroup and Deutsche Bank to develop the Kingking copper-gold prospect and the Baguio water supply project, respectively, as well as select partners and identify possible financing sources, according to Romualdez.

For the first semester of the year, the company will focus on securing the finances for the P2-billion Baguio water supply project that will strengthen the company's cash flow in the medium term.

Romualdez added that they are looking at export credit financing from Korea and Japan Export-Import credit agencies.

Known as the biggest gold mining company in the Philippines and the sixteenth largest in the world, Benguet Corp. has an existing chromite operation in Masinloc, Zambales, and a highly profitable operation in San Marcelino, Zambales.

It also has an existing Acupan Gold project in Benguet, which it now shares with small scale miners.

Visayas SMEs rule RP trade event

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST TRADE fair that was held last month generated P82.4 million in sales for small and medium-sized enterprises, with Central Visayas exhibitors raking in the most receipts, the Department of Trade and Industry reported.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said SMEs from Central Visayas chalked up P39.2 million or 48 percent of the National Trade Fair's total sales.

In an earlier report, DTI said the NTF earned a total of P21.6 million in 2005, which means this year's sales was higher by about 282 percent.

NTF's top sellers included furniture and furnishings, gifts, home décor and houseware, fashion accessories, and processed food.

"The numbers prove that local enterprises are getting the interest of giant purchasers, retailers and exporters," Favila said. "The performance of the SMEs in the NTF shows that they have a huge potential to generate business and livelihood in the countryside."

The trade chief said some 20,000 visitors checked out this year's NTF, which serves as a marketplace to promote SMEs to local and foreign buyers.

Favila said the raw materials showcase, which the DTI particularly highlighted during the fair, recorded 300 business inquiries from buyers of products made from bamboo, coconut by-products and Manila palm.

He added that the 45 SMEs which displayed their wares caught the attention of 15 institutional buyers who were looking for raw and semi-processed materials as well as end-products.

Negros Oriental Arts and Heritage emerged as the top seller for gifts and houseware, as its jade fossilized stone picture frame and box set was judged to be the best selling prototype for that category.

Cordillera-based Gayao's Furniture was the top vendor of furniture and furnishings, while Cagayan Valley's Reylen's Furniture was cited for its best selling furniture prototype.

Orient Gifts from Western Visayas led dealers of fashion accessories, but the best-selling prototype in this category was Southern Tagalog-based Getzon Enterprises' bariw bag with leather.

In Clark, school for pilots set to open in May

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—A $15.6-million commercial pilot training school will open here in the third week of May to address the shortage of pilots in the country, Clark Development Corp. president Antonio Ng said.

The proponent of the flying school, the International Aviation Group (IAG), is starting the project almost four months after it signed an agreement with the CDC in December last year.

The aviation institute, which Ng described as "world class" and the "first of its kind in Asia," will train a maximum of 400 pilots yearly for Airbus 320 planes.

"[This] will solve the declining number of pilots in the country," Ng said, explaining that most available pilots "are being pirated by other airlines due to their exceptional skills, including their strong command [of] the English language, which is now a basic requirement by the US-based Federal Aviation Administration and Canada-based International Civil Aviation Organization."

IAG, according to Ng, will invest $12.5 million more for additional training equipment.

IAG's training facility will be made up of two fixed-base simulators for the basic and intermediate phases of the flight instruction, and an A320 Level D full flight simulator.

The institute will also have seven single-engine training aircraft. "Aspiring pilots need not go to Hong Kong or Singapore for their flight simulator training because it will be available in Clark," Ng said.

Citing market forecasts, he said the aviation sector in Asia would need 6,000 new pilots a year over the next 20 years.

The Prescient Systems & Technologies Pte. Ltd. based in India, and SREI Infrastructure Finance Limited based in Singapore, are IAG's partners in the project.

Funding sought to enable cars to run on autogas

By Abigail L. Ho

TO ENCOURAGE MOTORISTS TO SHIFT TO autogas, or liquefied petroleum gas for transport, Eastern Petroleum Corp. is seeking different financing schemes from the government, multilateral lenders and commercial banks.

Eastern Petroleum president Fernando Martinez said it would take some P250 million to convert 10,000 vehicles, particularly taxis, to autogas in a year.

For this, he said an Asian Development Bank environmental loan could be tapped.

Apart from the multilateral lender, the Development Bank of the Philippines as well as commercial banks Bank of the Philippine Islands and Chinabank could also provide flexible financing schemes for taxi operators.

"We're working something out with BPI and Chinabank," Martinez said. "We're also trying to tie up with the DBP for possible financing."

In the case of the DBP, Martinez said Eastern Petroleum could front end the cost of converting taxis to autogas, and then work out payment schemes with the availing taxi operators. These operators could take out loans with the government financial institution.

The establishment of financing schemes for autogas conversion would not only help the country tap an alternative transport fuel but also help rid the streets of dilapidated taxis, he said.

Autogas use would also help taxi operators reduce their expenses as this fuel was estimated to bring down fuel consumption by between 25 percent and 30 percent," Martinez added.

He also urged the government to relax franchise rules for taxis that want to convert to the alternative fuel.

Transco to put up ₱50-M transmission line for Albay Electric

THE NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORP. (Transco) will be putting up a P50-million transmission line for the Albay Electric Cooperative to enable the power distributor to address the growing power needs of locators and tourism-related establishments in the area.

Transco president and chief executive Alan Ortiz said the 25-kilometer 69-kilovolt (kV) line would help meet the projected growth demand of locators there by ensuring the efficient delivery of power from the 700-megawatt (MW) Tiwi-Makban geothermal facility.

"There are seven existing locators in the area, all with a load of 7.5 MW," Ortiz told reporters. "Their load is projected to reach 17 MW in five years."

To be funded partly by Transco's internally generated fund and by Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, Ortiz said the yet-to-be-constructed line should help boost tourism and other investment activities in the area.

He said the entire project would be completed before the end of the year.

Abigail L. Ho

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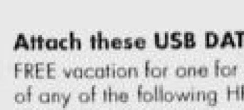

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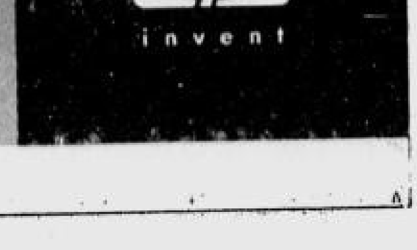

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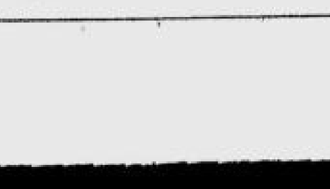

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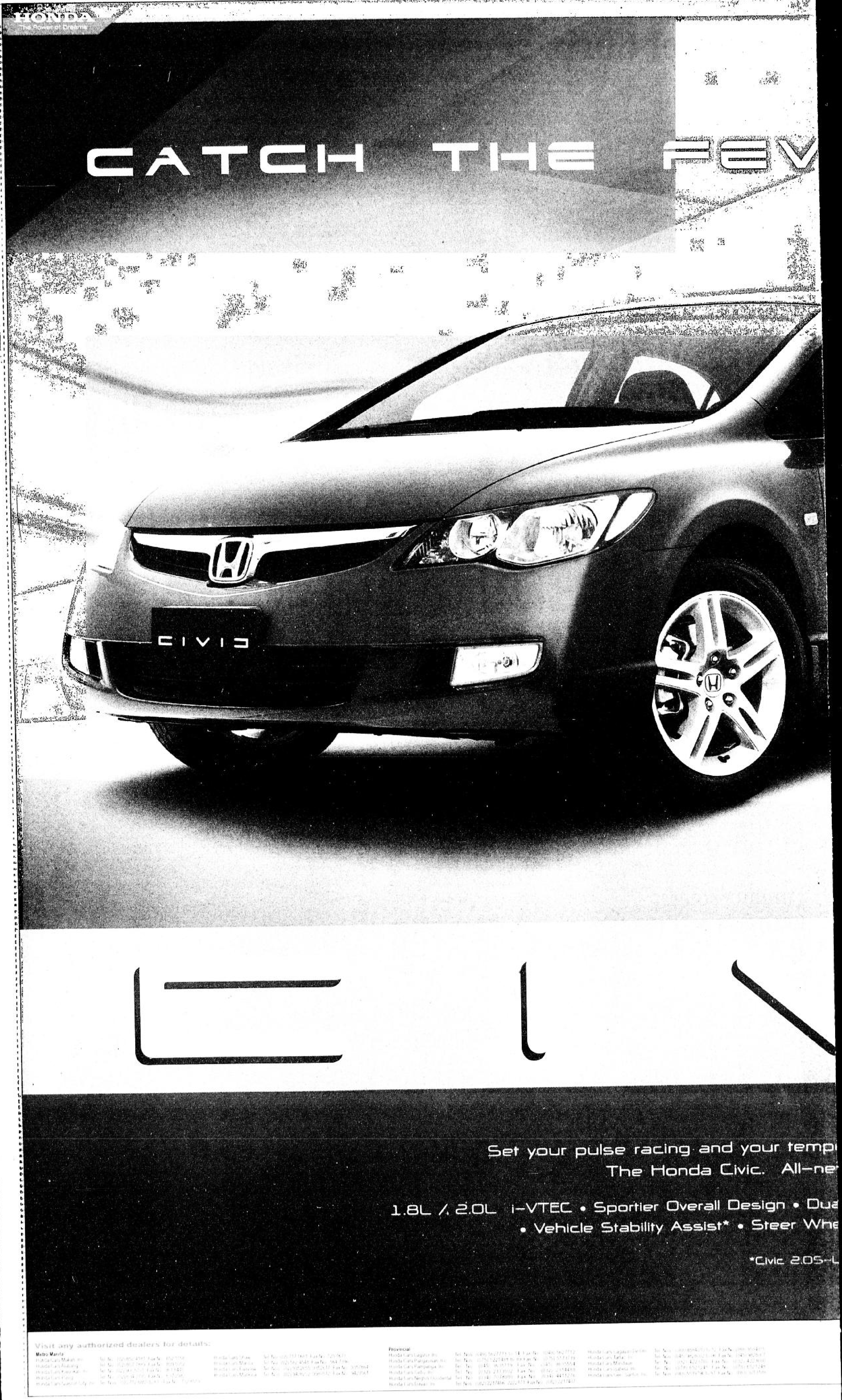
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BUSINESS*Monday*

I know what (and why) you're buying at the 'ukay'

YOU'VE SHOPPED IN AT LEAST one. Ukay-ukay, the popular term used to describe the selling of used clothes, bags, shoes, have proliferated in the country over the past years. Although the term became popular only in the past four or five years, selling of used clothing is not new. In Cebu, one vendor has been selling since 1984 and earning as much as P100,000 a day. When the rich started wearing designer garb which they bought cheap in Baguio, the ukay-ukay business became a shopping phenomenon. In Baguio they call it wagwag. What started in Baguio has now become a regular sight all over the Philippines. What sells in these shops, and why people do not mind buying clothes already worn by somebody else, is a phenomenon in itself. We asked our correspondents all over the country to answer these questions and we found out malls should not be afraid of 168 mall or the tiangges. The ukay-ukay shops are now fast becoming many consumers' shopping haven.

Folks line up for used shoes in Baguio

Wagwag stalls sometimes outsell department stores here

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—TOURISTS VISITING the summer capital would do well to set their alarms to 8:30 every night. That's when the city's wagwag (second-hand bargain clothes) dealers come out to display P100 boots, sandals and pumps.

USED shoes help bring tourists to the summer capital.
VINCENT CABREZA/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

In the last few months, people have been lining up to buy these cheap shoes, which have become a leading sales item in an otherwise underground trade.

The volume of shoes disposed of on the sidewalk of Session Road each night sometimes outsells the products displayed in department stores here.

People come in droves for secondhand products that have been marked down a second time due to low demand.

Used designer shoes imported from Hong Kong "have become cheap when offered on sidewalks because nobody buys them in regular bargain houses," says a used clothes dealer.

Inflation brought about by increased value added tax and unstable oil prices last year should have benefited the secondhand business, she said.

From 2001 to 2003, designer clothes and ready-to-wear clothes with brand names were sold separately because they were priced higher than the average wagwag products.

But the prices were still 50 percent lower than products sold in department stores.

But consumption has hit a new low here, "so that even wagwag products can be too expensive for consumers," she says.

Jennielyn Calamba, 17, who manages a footwear wagwag house at the Bayanihan Hotel here, says some of her unsold products are among the items being peddled on Session Road.

"If people just base their conclusions on how people consume the wagwag on the streets every evening, they would believe we turn a profit. But I sell shoes and I haven't had customers coming in except during weekends," she says.

"It's still clothes. People would rather pay for P10 or P15 dresses or T-shirts rather than shoes. That's how most of these products end up once we earn back our [P5,000 to P8,000] investment in a [wagwag box shipped from Hong Kong]," said Liesl Corilla, 18, who operates a wagwag house in the same hotel.

Many wagwag houses have closed because some traders feel they have reached their peak in 2003 when tourists flocked to Baguio for the secondhand clothes.

The Department of Trade and Industry once posted wagwag's potential revenues at P2 billion in a year. Each house used to invest P5,000 for each wagwag bag shipped by a wholesale distributor from Hong Kong.

A wagwag stall owner at the Baguio public market says the publicity surrounding wagwag almost killed her business. The Baguio market originally sold secondhand clothes at practically bargain basement prices until people started catering to the bargain houses in the downtown area.

"We're hoping to profit from tourists this Holy Week, but until then, we rely on regular customers who have learned to ride our trade cycle. They will wait for new boxes so they can choose the best buys. Then they will wait until we mark down our products to even P10 an item and they will return to buy the rest," she says.

In Bicol, poor housewives are number-one buyers

By Ephraim Aguilar
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

DARAGA, ALBAY—THE WOMAN does not mind the sweat streaming down her face as she picks from a pool of fabrics she calls a "bargain."

She is another mother shopping for an affordable "find" that would give a touch of elan to her or her kids' wardrobes. Put another way, she is one of the "worshippers" of the "ukay-ukay" that lurk in profitable corners of this town.

Shopkeepers

"Wagwag" or ukay-ukay, a colloquial term derived from the Filipino word "halukay," which means to forage through a heap in search of something, has encouraged the entrepreneurial spirit in a number of shopkeepers here.

Shopowners welcome the lower-incomed to their stores that sell used clothes from countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

The stores welcome the "bargain-hunters" seeking clothes for as low as P2 to P10, which cater mainly to the masses. These clothes are usually those that are not displayed in ukay-ukay stores, meaning they are the less standard ones, and are just placed on the "bargain table."

This table of bargain clothes is always present among ukay-ukay vendors.

Mariel Mapalo, an ukay-ukay owner in Daraga town, about six kilometers from downtown Legazpi City, says most of her customers flock the "bargain table" more than any other set of items in her store, and most people who buy come from the poor.

In Daraga, there are at least 16 ukay-ukay establishments located just alongside the wet market area where the smell of clothes and dried fish mix.

These ukay-ukay are far from the tiangges that, although they sell second-hand products, manage to maintain well-kept stores.

Here, you can even see some pieces of bargain clothes on the soil and the storekeepers do not bother picking them up.

Most saleable

The first thing vendors here would display are blouses, commonly ranging from P10 to about P50, given the fact that most customers are women. Next in line are shorts, ranging from P10 to P50.

"Since most of the buyers here are the masses, we cannot mark up our prices that much," Mapalo says.

Bags and shoes are the most expensive ukay-ukay items and the least sold. Prices of bags range from P50-P150 while those of the shoes range from P30 to P1,200.

Asked which of the brands are most saleable, Mapalo says people, especially the impoverished ones, are not really particular with the brands anymore.

She adds that seldom does she find famous signature clothes from the bulk delivered to her from Manila.

"In this business, the bulk of clothes are sealed when they are delivered, so you don't get to choose which items you are going to sell. We rely on fate, hoping that we get the good box all the time," Mapalo claims.

Katrina Urutia, a fresh graduate from the Bicol University, used to shopped at the ukay-ukay here during her college years. Her group of eight would shop during weekends.

"It was the time when new bulks of clothes arrived. That is what they call them *bagong wagwag* (new releases)," the 20-year-old student recalls. "I had never been particular with the brand. I was after good quality and the overall look and feel."

Business side

Mapalo, a mother of two children, and who has been in the business for almost eight years now, started with a P2,000 capital, which she loaned from a friend.

Now her daily earnings range from P360 to P5,000, while daily rent for her store is P180. She also has to pay for electricity.

Mapalo adds that her income from the ukay-ukay is only to subsidize their family's food and other necessities. The schooling of her two children, both enrolled in private schools here, is being taken cared of by her husband's parents now living in the US.

To start an ukay-ukay business here, one has to purchase a bulk of ukay-ukay products being shuttled from Manila. A bulk of 46 kilos would amount to P1,800-P4,500 while a bulk of 100 kilos would amount to P8,000-P17,000.

There is a tight competition among ukay-ukay establishments in the market. Some stores drop prices just to have cash to pay bills.

The peak season of sales in ukay-ukay here is December. Low months are August to September.

Mapalo opens her store at around 6:30 a.m. and closes it at around 5 p.m.

Filipino society

Prof. Eddie Balunso of the Bicol University (BU) Sociology Department says the need to change one's look is one reason why Filipinos patronize the ukay-ukay.

"Some people want to look like their idols and the only way they can afford a similar look is through the ukay-ukay," Balunso says.

Vendors agree there are more women buying ukay-ukay items than men. Balunso says most of her customers are housewives who buy clothes for themselves and their children.

Dr. Dolly Laguilles, chair of the BU Sociology Department, explains this as the "feminization of poverty," which means that the women, the predominant ukay-ukay buyers, are the ones affected by poverty firsthand.

Even in ukay-ukays, there is a reflection of class struggle.

"The ukay-ukay caters to all sectors, including the middle class and the well-off. But the poor buy the rejects. Here you can see that there is still the stratification of society even in ukay-ukays," Laguilles says.

The ukay-ukay, though it serves as a coping mechanism to poverty and helps those who cannot afford to buy expensive clothes, has a downside.

Balunso, who is taking up Master of Arts in Sociology at the Ateneo de Manila University, says the existence of ukay-ukays is detrimental to local producers.

There is a stereotype association of the ukay-ukay to imported items. Thus at work here is the colonial mentality in Filipinos.

However, Balunso says it is not really colonial mentality at work, but simply, the money. Or the lack of it.

CHILDREN'S clothes, blouses and shorts are the most sellable items at the Jaro Public Market.
PHOTOS BY HAZEL P. VILLA/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

In Iloilo, comfy clothes sell fast

By Hazel P. Villa
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—WEDNESDAY late afternoons at the dry goods section of the Jaro Public Market here is noisy, frenzied and chaotic as about 40 sellers of *ukay-ukay* or used clothing jostle for the attention of early birds who don't want to be caught in the mad rush of the famous Thursday Jaro market where the rest of the island seems to be buying and selling everything it can think of.

For Gemma Palermo who has been in the ambulant ukay-ukay business in the last two years, Jaro and Barotac Viejo in northern Iloilo are the best places to sell used clothing as these are popular ukay-ukay markets with people coming in from all walks of life.

Together with fellow ambulant ukay-ukay vendor Emily Tribunal at the other end of the dry goods section, they find children's clothes, blouses and shorts as the items that are easiest to sell in that order.

For this particular day (April 5, 2006), the two are not too happy as they have not been selling as much even if the most expensive items are P50 each and with proper haggling, can go down to P10 and P5.

The other vendors have even gone to the point of scribbling the cheapest prices on pieces of cardboard and hanging these at eye level with ropes tied to makeshift tarpaulins that serve as roofs.

"It must be because its graduation season, people have no money. It's the same too, when oil prices go up," says Palermo who has three young kids with the eldest aged 10, in Hiligaynon.

She says the ukay-ukay business is always affected by the economy and noted wryly that though there have been rollbacks in oil prices, these do not necessarily translate into people buying more used clothing from them.

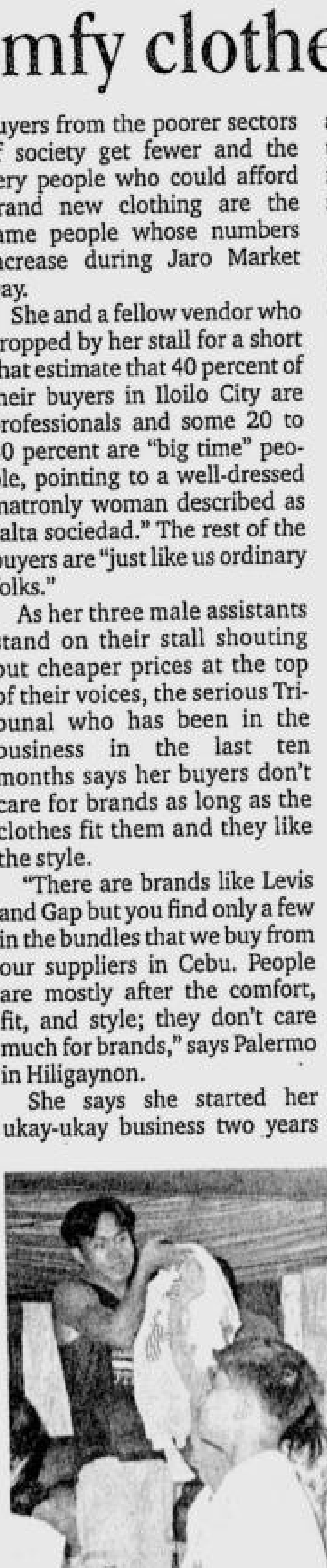
In fact, Palermo says, times may indeed be difficult since buyers from the poorer sectors of society get fewer and the very people who could afford brand new clothing are the same people whose numbers increase during Jaro Market Day.

She and a fellow vendor who dropped by her stall for a short chat estimate that 40 percent of their buyers in Iloilo City are professionals and some 20 to 30 percent are "big time" people, pointing to a well-dressed matronly woman described as "alta sociedad." The rest of the buyers are "just like us ordinary folks."

As her three male assistants stand on their stall shouting out cheaper prices at the top of their voices, the serious Tribunal who has been in the business in the last ten months says her buyers don't care for brands as long as the clothes fit them and they like the style.

"There are brands like Levis and Gap but you find only a few in the bundles that we buy from our suppliers in Cebu. People are mostly after the comfort, fit, and style; they don't care much for brands," says Palermo in Hiligaynon.

She says she started her ukay-ukay business two years ago with her husband Narciso upon seeing a friend doing well in it but this same friend closed shop last year.



THERE are now more buyers of used clothes among the upper class.

"There are ukay-ukay vendors who do good business, and there are some who do not earn as much, said Palermo in the dialect.

She says people like her with no regular employment have taken to selling used clothing after seeing others doing well in the business but laments there are just too many of them now, making the Jaro Market an elbow-to-elbow affair that drives prices too low and thins out profits.

Palermo and Tribunal who are both in their late 30s say the ukay-ukay market picks up in December and January that registers the highest sales and tapers off on February all the way to November when their profits would be used to buy weekly stocks of used clothing mostly coming from Cebu and Iloilo City suppliers whom they refused to name.

These stocks, called "bundles" are priced by the kilo and by the "class" such as 45 kilos of "bargain class" used clothing is sold by the supplier for P3,500. Class A or slightly used clothing costs more.

Palermo says that on a typical day, she earns about P1000 and on the really good days of year-end months, she can earn as much as P4,000 but she says she still has to tightly budget money because it is not enough to give her family a comfortable life.

When they are not doing the rounds of towns or provinces that have strong buying power, Tribunal tends to her ukay-ukay stall in front of the Mandurriao District Market while Palermo stays put in her house at Barrio Obrero here.

Any chatting that the ukay-ukay vendors do are bound to get interrupted when customers haggle down to give away prices. A slightly irritated vendor would just let go of a child's pink slightly used blouse for P5.

In Cebu, the young go for hip, trendy clothes

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—A NIKE T-SHIRT for P35. A pair of Guess pants for P150.

For Cebu's trendy young crowd but with very thin wallets, the alternative is *ukay-ukay*.

A black suit (slacks and jacket) for P250. Formal blouse for P50.

Young professionals find them all in their favorite *ukay-ukay* stall.

Children's clothing for P5 each. Queen-size comforter and queen-size blanket for P150 each. These are buys for many housewives.

The varieties go on and on, from a simple T-shirt to gowns. All these can be bought at very affordable prices at *ukay-ukay* stalls, which have sprouted practically everywhere in Cebu.

From where it originally started in Carbon, the oldest and biggest public market of Cebu City, the *ukay-ukay* business now thrives successfully in many areas especially in Cebu City, and in every public market of each of Cebu province's five component cities and 47 towns.

"I bought a spaghetti shirt for P10 here unlike in the malls they are sold at least P150 each. As a student, I barely have enough so it is very practical for me to come here and buy my stuff. I could be very, very trendy," says Adel Pomento, a 20-year old student.

Pomento says she frequents the *ukay-ukay* stalls every time she gets her allowance. According to her, the *ukay-ukay* stalls have plenty of things to offer making their items very enticing and saleable.

Freelance events host Malou Inocando-Tabar, 28, proudly declared that she has been patronizing *ukay-ukay* items for years now.

Aside from the very reasonable prices, Tabar says she gets to buy very stylish items, particularly original and branded ones.

"Our outfits are very important to us. As a host, I have to change my clothing so often. I am grateful that I could buy lots of them at very affordable prices. I often get lucky because I always get to buy the last stocks, meaning, those that have not been used yet and mind you they are originals," exclaims Tabar.

Tabar's favorites include baby shirts that cost P35 to P150 each, short pants for P35 to P50 and Lacoste, Guess, Old Navy, Nike, Banana Republic and other branded products for P50 to P100 only.

"For my P1,000 which I set aside every time I get my honoraria, I get to buy at least seven items already and sometimes I can even bargain for less so I could buy very cute snoopy Stuff toys. In the malls, what shall I buy for P1,000?" she says.

Derlie Cagais, 27, a paralegal staff at a Cebu law firm, also makes it a habit to be in the Carbon market at around 10 p.m., when the bundles of *ukay-ukay* are usually opened.

This native of Lanao Del Norte says all her formal wears—slacks, coats and blouses—were bought from *ukay-ukay* stalls.

She says she gets praises from her colleagues in the law firm and court personnel for her outfits.

"I feel great. I feel dignified with what I'm wearing and they don't know that these are just *ukay-ukay*," she says.

Catalina Camaso, a 53-year old utility worker at the Palace of Justice in Cebu City, buys her shoes from the *ukay-ukay* stalls. Camaso says she recently got a pair of leather shoes for P150.

But the overwhelming patronage of the used clothing has its downside. Competition has affected the profit of many *ukay-ukay* vendors, according to Aurelia Laguna, 56, who has been in the business for over 20 years.

One of the original stall owners in Carbon market, Laguna says she earned at least P100,000 a day during the very lucrative years from 1984 to 1987.

"We were only three vendors and we earned big. Today, we are almost 200 here and for many years now our profits have dropped. We now earn an average P2,000 to P5,000 every day but that is still okay. This is still a surviving business," Laguna says.

The stocks she says came from Japan, Korea, Australia and the United States.

A "first class" bundle that contain mostly branded items costs P6,000 while for Class B and Class C, the prices ranged from P3,000 and P1,000, she adds.

Even owners of boutiques trooped to their shops, Laguna says.

She says most of the buyers from boutiques get coat and tie for P150, gowns for P200 and long-sleeve blouses for P100.

When sold to the boutiques, the prices of the said items tripled, she adds.

"They come often to us and buy all these stuff. After which they have them laundered and ironed and the stuff look like they were not anymore *ukay-ukay*," a chuckling Laguna says in Cebuano.

Designer brands go first

By Germelina Lacorte
PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—"WHY BUY A PAIR of Levi's 501 jeans at P3,000 when you can get it at P600? Or the Burberry shoulder bag at P5,000 when you can get it here at P500 to P600?" asks Connie del Mundo, 32, turning around to show the pair of red tab Levi's pedal jeans she is wearing.

It is made in Hong Kong, she says, rather proudly because she seldom sees its kind on display among local stores here. She found it in the crate where she and her friends rummaged for *ukay-ukay* (used clothes) to buy from her supplier in nearby Lizada street.

Del Mundo sells assorted used goods—from blouses and pants to bags—in her small store Connie's Selected Ukay-Ukay she opened in one of the old commercial buildings here over a month ago. One can easily find the old commercial building along C.M. Recto street here with a huge streamer announcing "Baratillo sa Recto" and get lost in the jungle of clothes and shops teeming in the ground floor.

But Connie's Selected Ukay-Ukay is among the few stores on the second floor of "Baratillo sa Recto," recognizable only for its promise to give the buyers the selected picks.

She says it takes fashion savvy and a broad knowledge about brands for someone to appreciate the goods being sold here.

"People who come to us are already too sophisticated and too advanced intheir taste," says Del Mundo, fingering her designer bag—this time by another Italian luxury label Fendi.

Once their supplier from the warehouse opens the crate containing these goods, the first to get sold are the branded ones. Sometimes, when a pair of jeans or a designer bag, is just too irresistible to let go, she doesn't sell it anymore, as what happened to the jeans. She buys it for herself. "*At least dito, libre ka,*" she says, smiling.

It was her friend, who opened a similar store at the Doña Segunda Building here, who urged her to go into the business. After all, assorted *ukay-ukay* goods are non-perishable and promise a lot of profits.

Sales have been so good, so far, she assures. "I can easily sell the goods because they're affordable. People won't regret buying them because they're cheap," she says.

About 90 per cent of those who come to buy in her store are women. "You can shove an original Gucci bag for only one third of a price right on some people's noses, but not knowing the difference, they still think it's expensive," she says, shaking her head.

Indeed, it takes a lot of brand knowledge to spot an original Levi's jeans from a fake, which are also flooding the market.

After only a month in the business, she's not complaining. Her most saleable items are blouses and bags but it could also be anything. She also sells different branded t-shirts here from Hangten, Gap, to Giordano and Lacoste. Her bags, include the Fendi, Burberry, Gucci, Ralph Lauren and Nike.

Prices of those made in China differ from those made in the US. She looks forward to the day when *ukay-ukay* will become a regular fare in the market.

Diversifying

But unlike Connie, Diosdada Sangines, 47, who has been in the business for years, is diversifying her business into something else. The entry of more players brings about stiff competition in the market, affecting her sales and profitability.

"You need more capital to compete now and the rent is increasing.

Everything is going up, including the prices of gasoline and people are expecting the same prices of *ukay-ukay* goods," Sangines tells the INQUIRER.

"Before, we used to post 30 per cent profit margin, now, we're happy if we can get 20 per cent," she adds.

"We're trying so hard to survive," she said.

When she opened Sien San's General Merchandise two years ago, there were not so many players in the market. Her store is just one of so many that sprouted all over a corner of Ponciano street selling used clothing, surplus items, bedsheets, blouses, blankets, curtains, stuff toys, and more.

In 1998, she recalls, there was only one group selling *ukay-ukay* near a bank in Bankerohan public market.

"Now the business has become so rampant, you can see one in every corner street," she says.

To survive, she recently opened a sari-sari store right in her *ukay-ukay* store in Ponciano, signed the deal to sell Natasha shoes, opened an e-load service and also become an agent, recruiting workers bound for Brunei.

"Soon, we're going to serve *puto-maya* right here," she says.

With the number of people going into this business, *ukay-ukay* will no longer become viable in the future, she says.

"We're losing the market because the users themselves are now buying stocks so that they will also start their own business. Everybody wants to go into the *ukay-ukay* business."

But she was amazed by how the market has been catching up. Before, it was a no-no to give *ukay-ukay* as gifts but now, people love to receive them.

"They even love the smell," says Sangines. "Our sales shoot up in December because people are buying *ukay-ukay* for gifts. Most people I know love the *ukay-ukay* smell.

You no longer have to wash them. Simply iron them and give them out as gifts," she says, looking around for bags, or wallets, even face towels and handkerchiefs for someone else's birthday. She has them all in her store.

Through the years, she has developed her own "suki" or regular clients.

"Most of our clients are not really poor. Some of them own printing presses; others are doctors and the rest in the medical profession. They are choosy and have knowledge about brands. They buy by the bulk," says Sangines, who used to travel to Labuan, Malaysia, the transshipment point of dry goods from Singapore.

"I used to repack them and board the barter boats to Zamboanga," she says, recalling the good old days.

Increasing transport cost has forced her to increase the cost of her bedsheets and curtains from the prevailing P350 a kilo over a year ago to P380 to P400 a kilo now.

She also sells stuff toys, ranging from P350 to P500 a kilo, depending on the brand. Her Garfield stuff toys sells at about one-fourth of the original price, her Korean bags sells one third or one fourth the price, and people are buying them.

"Most of those who come to us, they look for the brands. They know that they could not buy those brands at the price we're selling," she says.

Both agree that *ukay-ukay* is breeding a new culture that runs counter to the culture of the mall.

"We still go to the mall these days but only to compare prices," says Del Mundo. "We've turned into very wise buyers."

"*Sayang,*" says Sangines, referring to the pesos that she's going to spend there. "Your P250 can already buy five blouses."

"Buying *ukay-ukay* is addicting," says Del Mundo, describing the thrill of finding something precious in some things that somebody else has thrown away. "Once you've got a taste for it, you'll get hooked."

Those who are buying *ukay-ukay* are no longer anyone's old notion of "poor" anymore, she says. They are the fashionistas, the wise buyers, with more discriminating tastes and want the best value out of their money."

Germelina Lacorte

CONNIE'S Selected Ukay-Ukay proprietor Connie del Mundo in Davao City.

UKAY stores here do not have enough name brand products to meet demand.

PHOTOS BY BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Easter 'Eggs-capade' at Discovery Suites

AN EASTER GETAWAY WITHIN THE city where families can bond and experience the quiet comforts of home combined with the luxurious pampering of a five-star hotel is now within reach.

From April 1 to 16, Discovery Suites's Easter "Eggs-capade" package offers families, comprised of two adults and two children 12 years old and below, a minimum three-night stay in a spacious Junior or One-Bedroom family suite at P8,888++ and P9,888++, respectively.

This 3-day room package is laden with valuable perks such as complimentary breakfast buffet, daily newspapers, free use of the Jacuzzi and swimming pool, complimentary dial-up Internet access and free parking.

Special Easter season rates are also available for the hotel's spacious two and three-bedroom family suites. Families or parties consisting of at least four people may avail themselves of Discovery Suites' fully-furnished accommodations complete with kitchen and dining facilities at P6,525++ and P8,505++ per night respectively.

On Easter Sunday (April 16), 2 p.m., children of all ages will enjoy a fun-filled and riotous "Chicken Little Egg Hunt Party". For only P400 net per person, guests can partake of hearty merienda at the hotel's Magellan room and have access to the Easter "Romp n' Play" area at the Columbus Room. A party host will preside over fun-laden programs inspired by Walt Disney's animation hit "Chicken Little" which includes games, raffles, a traditional Easter Egg Hunt and special giveaways from Viva Video Inc, M&M's chocolate candies, Kleenex, Disney & Me Magazine, Disney Princess Magazine, Purefoods Tender Juicy Hotdogs, Ascorbic Acid Ceelin, Clover Chips, Cheezy Corn Crunch, Anchor Wam, Hallmark and Kiddie-Party.com.

For inquiries and reservations, call Discovery Suites at 683-8222.

GMA AT TJF

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace H. Durano (2nd from right) open the 1st Tourism Jobs Fair (TJF) held at The Forum of the Philippine International Convention Center. Organized by the Department of Tourism, the TJF was swamped by thousands of jobseekers as it offered more than 34,000 jobs in various sectors of the tourism industry.

Enalapril protects kidney function

RESULTS OF A STUDY PUBLISHED in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that enalapril, which belongs to a class of anti-hypertensive drugs known as the angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor, provides kidney function similar to another class of medicine for high blood pressure.

Based on the study, it was shown that the decrease in the glomerular filtration rate (GFR)--considered to be the best measure of kidney function--in the enalapril group (composed of 74 patients) is -14.9 ml per minute per 1.73 m² while -17.9 ml per minute per 1.73 m² in the angiotensin receptor blocker (another blood pressure lowering agent) group.

This -3.0 ml per minute per 1.73 m² indicated that enalapril was noninferior to ARB. The protective effect of enalapril on the kidneys is important since the kidney is one of the vital organs that are damaged with long-term elevation of the blood pressure.

Nephrologists or kidney specialists agree that the GFR is very important because it determines the status of the kidney and the extent of damage or disease of this vital organ. This gives nephrologists a better idea in the treatment of the patient's hypertensive condition.

To determine the GFR, clinicians consider several factors including the age, serum creatinine, gender and race. Serum creatinine measures the waste products that accumulate in the blood and should be excreted through the kidneys. As kidney function slows down, its level goes up.

Aside from giving renal protection, enalapril was also noted to have a vital role in lowering the risk of cardiovascular events. This reinforces other clinical data on the favorable benefits of ACE inhibitors like enalapril. These benefits are believed to be due to other favorable mechanisms of ACE inhibition not necessarily related to its blood pressure lowering effects.

However, one major advantage of enalapril over ARB is the cost.

Pascual Laboratories offers not just a safe but inexpensive brand of enalapril. Compared to the originator brand, their brand of enalapril is about 50 percent more economical. The 5-mg tablet costs P12.00, P14.25 for 10mg and 17.25 for 20mg. Some antihypertensive preparations cost more than P50 per tablet.

Prescription products like enalapril should be taken only with doctors' advice. For more information on Pascual's brand of enalapril, text HYP MESSAGE to 0920-9618126.

Epilepsy Exemplar Awards search ongoing

THE PHILIPPINE LEAGUE AGAINST Epilepsy (PLAE), in cooperation with Abbott Laboratories, has launched a nationwide search for the 2006 Epilepsy Exemplar Awards. Four winners—two adults and two children—will be given the awards this year. They will receive cash prizes, trophies and the opportunity to be PLAE Ambassadors of Epilepsy.

Each nominee must be a Filipino citizen, 8 to 65 years old, diagnosed to have epilepsy, with pleasing personality and good oral communication skills. He/she must be willing to act as spokesperson and role model for patients with epilepsy.

Criteria for judging include good seizure control, ideal patient behavior in complying with his medical treatments, positive attitudes toward his condition such as optimism, self-determination and independence that allows him to live a normal life and academic/ professional achievements.

This year's board of judges consists of the following 1)Dr. Elma Marañon, president, Philippine League Against Epilepsy 2) Dr. Josephine Gutierrez, chair, Epilepsy Council, Philippine Neurological Association 3) Dr. Martesio Perez, founding president of PLAE, 4) Baldwin Kho, president, Epilepsy Awareness Advocates Inc and 2003 Epilepsy Exemplar awardee, and 5) Annie Tapia, product manager, Abbott International.

Persons with epilepsy may be nominated in writing by their family, friends, teachers, classmates or coworkers. Nomination forms may be obtained from their neurologist's clinics, the PLAE secretariat or downloaded from the PLAE website www.plae.org.ph. The nominees must each accomplish a nominee information sheet and answer a five-item questionnaire. These must be submitted to the PLAE secretariat along with photocopies of the nominee's credentials. The deadline of submission of nominations is on April 30.

Winners of this year's search will be awarded in formal ceremonies during the 5th National Epilepsy Awareness Week Celebration from Sep. 6 to 10.

In 2003, six awardees were honored including a visual artist, a veterinarian, a sanitary inspector, a nurse and a master's degree holder in health education and two honor students.

For more information, call the PLAE secretariat (Department of Neurosciences, Philippine General Hospital care of Vanessa Chan at 525-4996) or 2006 Epilepsy Awards Project chair Dr. Hazel Paragua, Cardinal Santos Medical Center at 727-0001 local 2176.

'Feast on Fish' at Pancake House

THERE IS SOMETHING "FISHY" GOING ON AT Pancake House, and the "catch" is that it's something special for this month of April. Pancake House--which was recently cited as an "Outstanding Filipino Franchise of the Year 2005"-invites everyone to "Feast on Fish" with a wide variety of dishes to enjoy in a casual yet warm dining ambience. Lent may be a season for fasting and abstinence from meat dishes, but at Pancake House, dining becomes no sacrifice-in fact, it's an indulgence that's totally guilt-free. The menu is aplenty with sumptuous fish-based, main course meals to choose from. Visit the more than 60 branches of Pancake House all over the metropolis and in the gasoline stations along the North and South Luzon Expressways. For inquiries, call 893-4822 or e-mail: phi@pancakehouse.com.ph.

BRIGHT SUMMER WITH DUCKS

Ducks Unlimited gets into the summer spirit with its new collection of candy-colored tees and perfect-fitting bottoms. Bright is this season's statements with Ducks Unlimited array of tops-pique shirts, cotton woven button-downs and regular cotton tees. Modelled by Anjo Dalisay, Ducks collections also reveals a youthful vibrance through its color palette, classic checks and playful designs. Ducks Unlimited shops are located at all top supermalls in Metro Manila, Bulacan and Pampanga.

Explore your world with Thule

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR ONCE again to dust off your bike gear, organize your luggage and go on a road trip as we welcome summer 2006. Strengthen family ties and create new friendships with Thule's line of roof racks and load carriers. Geared towards active individuals and families who like to explore the great outdoors, Thule provides you with the solution to maximize the load capacity of your car, AUV or SUV. Unlike locally manufactured load carriers, Thule has an easy snap on, snap off feature which lets you install the load carriers with ease. With Thule, there's no drilling required, it's guaranteed safe from rust, and aerodynamically designed to complement the exterior design of the vehicle. Thule's line of load carriers are 100-percent machine made from Sweden and has passed the four seasons test of the ISO. Thule is also an accredited OEM designer and supplier of load carriers for brands such as Ford, Volvo, Land Rover, Nissan, Toyota, BMW and Mercedes Benz.

All Thule roof racks and boxes are water proof and theft proof. The aerodynamic design provides a sleek look to the vehicle. Shown is a Kia Sorento SUV equipped with a Thule roof and bike rack. For more information on how to gear up and make your vacation a more adventurous one, load up and visit their display at Toyota Pasong Tamo or the Thule-EGR showrooms in Ortigas Avenue (744-6367) and Pasong Tamo (892-7847), or log on to www.thule.com.

City, Jazz achieve amazing results during fuel eco run

HONDA'S i-DSI ENGINE WAS RECENTLY PUT to test as 28 City and Jazz owners participated in the 3rd leg of the Xtra Amazing Fuel Eco Run held in Pangasinan.

Honda, in cooperation with Petron, embarked on this 4-series fuel economy event to drum up awareness on efficient driving techniques in the face of spiraling gasoline costs. Traversing a total of 58 km of highway driving, participants squeezed in amazing fuel mileage in their Honda City and Jazz carrying the very fuel-efficient i-DSI engine.

Co-sponsored by Pioneer, Motolite and BPI/MS Insurance, both the City and the Jazz achieved amazing results averaging 33 km per liter. The winners were Michael Asuncion (Jazz CVT: 37.14 km/li); Manuel Serafica (Jazz MT: 32.25 km/li); Red Mejia (City CVT: 31.35 km/li); and Ronald Geronimo (City MT: 32.13 km/li).

Participants coming from various parts of Luzon gathered at Jollibee Lucao Feb. 25 for the briefing and proceeded to nearby Petron Lucao for the kickoff point. HCPI deputy head for marketing Arnel Doria and Petron representative Edison Chapno did the flag-off which started the fuel efficiency run for highway driving. Following a fixed route and given a maximum travel time of 3 hours, the run ended at Petron Alaminos.

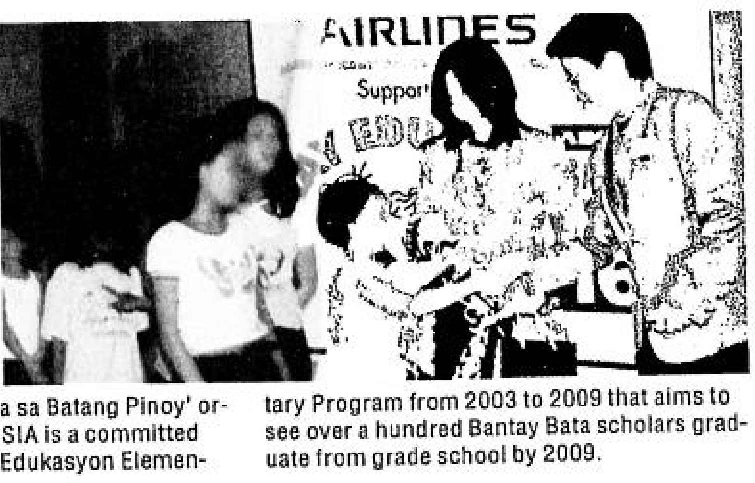
"Honda has always been known to produce products which give the best value for its customers. The City and the Jazz were created specifically for young professionals and families who want a stylish yet functional vehicle. The run's amazing results show that with proper driving techniques and leading-edge technology like Honda's i-DSI engine, anyone can achieve the best mileage for their cars," Doria said.

A representative from the Automotive Association of the Philippines graced the event while provincial administrator PCSupt. Wilmer Panabang updated participants of various tourism developments taking in place in the area.

All participants were treated to lunch and winners awarded at Don Gonzalo Montemayor Wharf, Pangasinan at the end of the run. Each winner was rewarded P10,000 in cash. The Xtra Amazing Fuel Eco Run was also made possible through the support of media partners DWRT, DWKX, Jam 88.3 and DWWW.

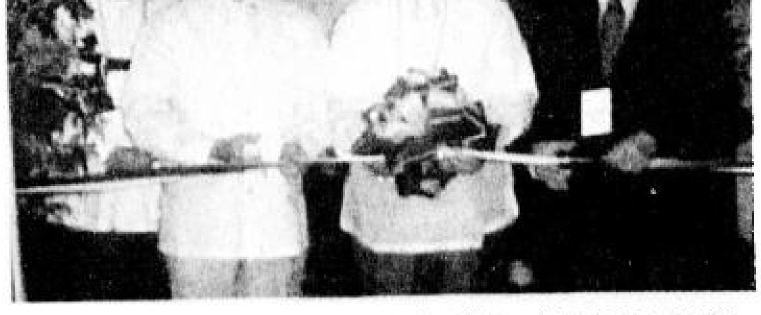
SHOWN, from left, are Arnel Doria, deputy head for marketing of Honda Cars Philippines Inc, Butch Gamboa, host/producer of 'Motoring Today', Wilmer Panabang, Provincial Administrator of Alaminos City, Red Mejia and Tintin Canillas, City CVT category champion, Ronald Geronimo, City MT category champion, Mary Grace Asuncion and Michael Asuncion, Jazz CVT category champion and Ron delos Reyes, host/producer of 'AutoReview'.

SIA CELEBRATES WITH SCHOLARS



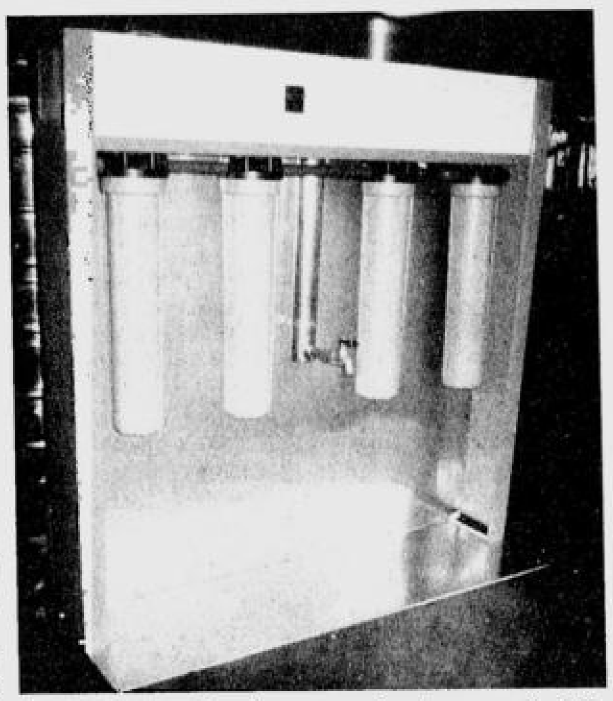
Singapore Airlines (SIA) marketing communications and services staff Clarissa Morelos (right) and Noreen Hernandez (left) gives out Snoopy toys in SIA A380 gift bags to SIA scholars during the 'Mini Pista ng Bata Pamaskong Handog Para sa Batang Pinoy' organized by Bantay Bata. SIA is a committed supporter of the Bantay Edukasyon Elementary Program from 2003 to 2009 that aims to see over a hundred Bantay Bata scholars graduate from grade school by 2009.

LEADERS FOR HEALTH PROGRAM DONORS FORUM



Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III, Ateneo Graduate School of Business (AGSB) dean Dr. Alfredo RA Bengzon and Pfizer president and country manager Gerry E. Bacarro cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the exhibit for the Leaders for Health Program (LHP) Donors Forum. LHP has developed health leaders in 40 medically underserved communities who continue to develop and implement effective strategies and good governance to strengthen their healthcare system. The Donors' Forum showcased the local projects of each municipality that sustain the community development efforts of the LHP. Behind Secretary Duque is Ateneo de Manila University president Fr. Bienvenido Niebres SJ.

Affordable water station business



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DMPI NOW 3G ENABLED

As part of its continuous expansion, Digital Mobile Philippines Inc (DMPI), owners of Sun Cellular, was recently awarded with 3rd Generation (3G) frequencies by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC). Shown, from left, are DMPI AVP for network planning Rene Morta, NTC Deputy Commissioner Jorge Sarmiento, DMPI SVP for legal lawyer Bill Pamintuan, DMPI consultant Richard Zawila, NTC Commissioner Ronald Olivar Solis, and NTC Deputy Commissioner Jaime Fortes. With 3G, DMPI will be able to offer such services as video phone, video mailbox, music and game downloads, video streaming and high-speed Internet access.

DREW GETS ABOARD SUPERFERRY

TV host Drew Arellano goes onboard SuperFerry for an episode of his TV show 'Balikbayan', which airs on the newest local channel QTV11. SuperFerry partnered with QTV11 to support its objective of promoting the destinations in the Philippines, while endearing the public to experience an enjoyable sea travel onboard the SuperFerry. For a vacation that combines the pleasure of a SuperFerry journey and excitement of the islands, log on to www.SuperFerry.com.ph or call the SuperFerry hotline at 528-7000.

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More Classified Ads on page A16

CGEAHS Batch '85 reunion

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The following stock certificates were declared lost:

1) 6,000 **Meralco "A"** shares serial numbers 29193 & 552777 registered to **Rosita Co**
2) 3,000 **Petron** shares serial numbers 497610, 710643, 1221352, 1438253 registered to **See Sin Tee**

If found, please contact BDO Securities Corp. **848-6300.**

If no contest received, new certificate will be issued.

(PDI–April 3, 10 & 17, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
6th Judicial Region
BRANCH 3
Kalibo, Aklan

IN RE: PETITION FOR DECLARATION OF PRESUMPTIVE DEATH OF THE ABSENTEE VALENTINO TORRES ELCANO FOR PURPOSES OF REMARRIAGE PURSUANT TO ART. 41 OF THE FAMILY CODE

CIVIL CASE NO. 7715

JOELINA TEJADA-ELCANO,
Petitioner.
x-----------------------------------x

ORDER

A verified petition was filed before this Court by petitioner, through counsel, alleging: That she was married to Valentino Torres Elcano on September 20, 1994; that after their marriage, petitioner's husband abandoned her and their children in March 1996 and never returned up to the present; that she has not received any news or information of his whereabouts or whether or not he is still alive; that petitioner and her children looked for and exerted diligent and reasonable efforts in searching for the whereabouts of Valentino Torres Elcano; that petitioner has a well-founded belief that her husband is already dead; and that petitioner desires to start a new life and hopes to remarry and for this reason, she has filed the instant petition pursuant to the second paragraph of Article 41 of the Family Code of the Philippines.

Finding the petition to be sufficient in form and substance, the same is hereby set for initial hearing on **MAY 16, 2006 at 8:30 a.m.** at the Session Hall of this Court, Branch 3, Kalibo, Aklan.

Let a copy of this Order be published before the hearing, at the expense of the petitioner, once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks in a widely-read newspaper of general circulation, in order that all persons interested in the above-entitled case may appear before this Court at the place and on the date and hour set herein and show cause, if any, why this petition should not be granted.

SO ORDERED.

Kalibo, Aklan, Philippines
March 20, 2006.

(Sgd.) SHEILA MARTELINO-CORTES
Regional Trial Judge

(PDI - April 10, 17 & 24, 2006)

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Application forms and additional information may be obtained from the Institutional Development Department, 6th Floor, NEA Building, NIA Road, Diliman, Quezon City. Deadline for submission of application is on 28 April 2006.

(Sgd.) **EDITA S. BUENO**
Administrator

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OBITUARIES

ARTURO ARNALDO HABANA

Peacefully joined our Creator on April 5, 2006 at the age of 68.

His bereaved family, relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Cosmopolitan Funeral Home, Camus Ext., Davao City.

Interment will be on April 12, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. in his Countryhome at Sitio Habana, Catigan, Toril, Davao City.

In lieu of flowers, donation to the GAWAD KALINGA, Davao Chapter will be appreciated.

DEATH NOTICE

RENATO MASANGA TOPACIO

Died peacefully on April 10, 2006 at the age of 79.

His body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Ave., Q. C.

Cremation is on April 12, 2006, 9:00 am at Loyola Crematorium, Marikina City.

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OBITUARIES

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

MARTHA DERAYUNAN BACALING

peacefully joined her Creator on April 8, 2006 at the age of 80.

Her bereaved husband, Dr. Severino Bacaling; children, Eddie & Renee, Remia & Gilbert Evaristo, Dr. Jose Hector, Jocelyn & Alo Buhay, Marilou & Merick Nepomuceno, Marivic, Paul & Cherrie; grandchildren, Minnie B. Jameson, Raymond, Edward, Martin & Michael Bacaling, Maia, Marilou, Joseph Evaristo, Chris, Miel, Caroline & Angelo Buhay, Andrew & Alex Nepomuceno, Carlo & Ethan Bacaling; great grandchildren, Anise Jameson, Andre, Didi, Aliza, & Matthew Bacaling, Mikaella, John, Isabel & Caleb Evaristo; sisters, Eva Bacaling, Sr. Mary Bernard Derayunan, R.G.S., Zenaida Deocampo (†), Maria Luisa Derayunan (†), Sr. Josefa Derayunan, R.A.; stepmother, Clarita Derayunan & half-siblings, Fannie Rodriguez, Tessie, Sonnie (†), Francisco (†), Pio (†), Jun & Elena Derayunan, relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Saint Joseph the Worker Church, Jaro, Iloilo City. Interment will be on Wednesday, April 12, 2006 after the 3:00 pm funeral Mass.

In Loving Memory

On the 10th Death Anniversary of

ASUNCION M. GEMPERLE

August 7, 1931 – April 11, 1996

We, her family, together with her brothers, sisters, and relatives, request the pious reader to remember her in prayer. Holy Mass will be offered tomorrow, April 11, 2006 at the following churches:

SANTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO *McKinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati City*	6:15 A.M. 7:30 A.M. 12:15 Noon 6:00 P.M.
ST. ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGUORI PARISH *Magallanes Village, Makati City*	6:15 A.M. 7:00 A.M. 6:00 P.M.
ST. JOHN BOSCO (DON BOSCO) CHURCH *Pasay Road, Makati City*	6:30 A.M. 7:30 A.M. 6:00 P.M.
OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL SHRINE *Doña Juana S. Rodriguez St., New Manila Quezon City*	6:00 A.M. 7:00 A.M. 6:00 P.M.
CHRIST THE KING PARISH *Greenmeadows, Quezon City*	6:00 A.M. 7:00 A.M. 6:00 P.M.
SANTUARIO DE SAN JOSE *Greenhills East, San Juan, M. Manila*	6:15 A.M. 7:15 A.M. 6:15 P.M.
MARY THE QUEEN PARISH *Greenhills West, San Juan, M. Manila*	6:00 A.M. 7:00 A.M. 6:00 P.M.
SANCTA MARIA STELLA ORIENTIS CHAPEL *University of Asia and the Pacific, Pearl Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City*	7:45 A.M. 12:05 Noon

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Editor Leo Magno

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House-sponsored VoIP bill nears approval

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

A HOUSE-SPONSORED MEASURE PROPOSING the deregulation of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services in the country has passed second reading at the House of Representatives.

"The House just passed on second reading the VoIP bill. The third reading is just ministerial," said George Kintanar, consultant to the House committee on information and communications technology, in a text message to Infotech.

There were several proposed measures filed last year to deregulate VoIP in the Philippines. House Bills 3476 and 3644, filed by Representatives Clavel Martinez and Abraham Kahlil Mitra respectively, would open commercial VoIP to non-telecommunication companies.

The House ICT committee eventually came up with a consolidated bill.

VoIP is considered a disruptive technology for the telecommunications industry since it routes phone calls through the Internet instead of the traditional public switched telephone networks, thereby lowering the cost of making calls.

In the Philippines, VoIP has dramatically slashed the cost of making internationals calls to as low as .05 US cents from the current .40 US cents a minute. This would be a bane for traditional telephone companies since their bread-and-butter for the past decades has come from international long distance calls.

In a guideline issued last year, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) considers VoIP as a value-added service, which . means the Philippine Telecommunications Act or Republic Act 7925 no longer governs it.

Telecommunications companies granted a congressional franchise are the only entities allowed to offer voice services. As a value-added service, VoIP falls under the deregulated services, according to NTC Memorandum Circular Number 05-08-2005.

The House ICT committee said last year that the consolidated bill aims to "complement" the NTC guidelines that were issued last year.

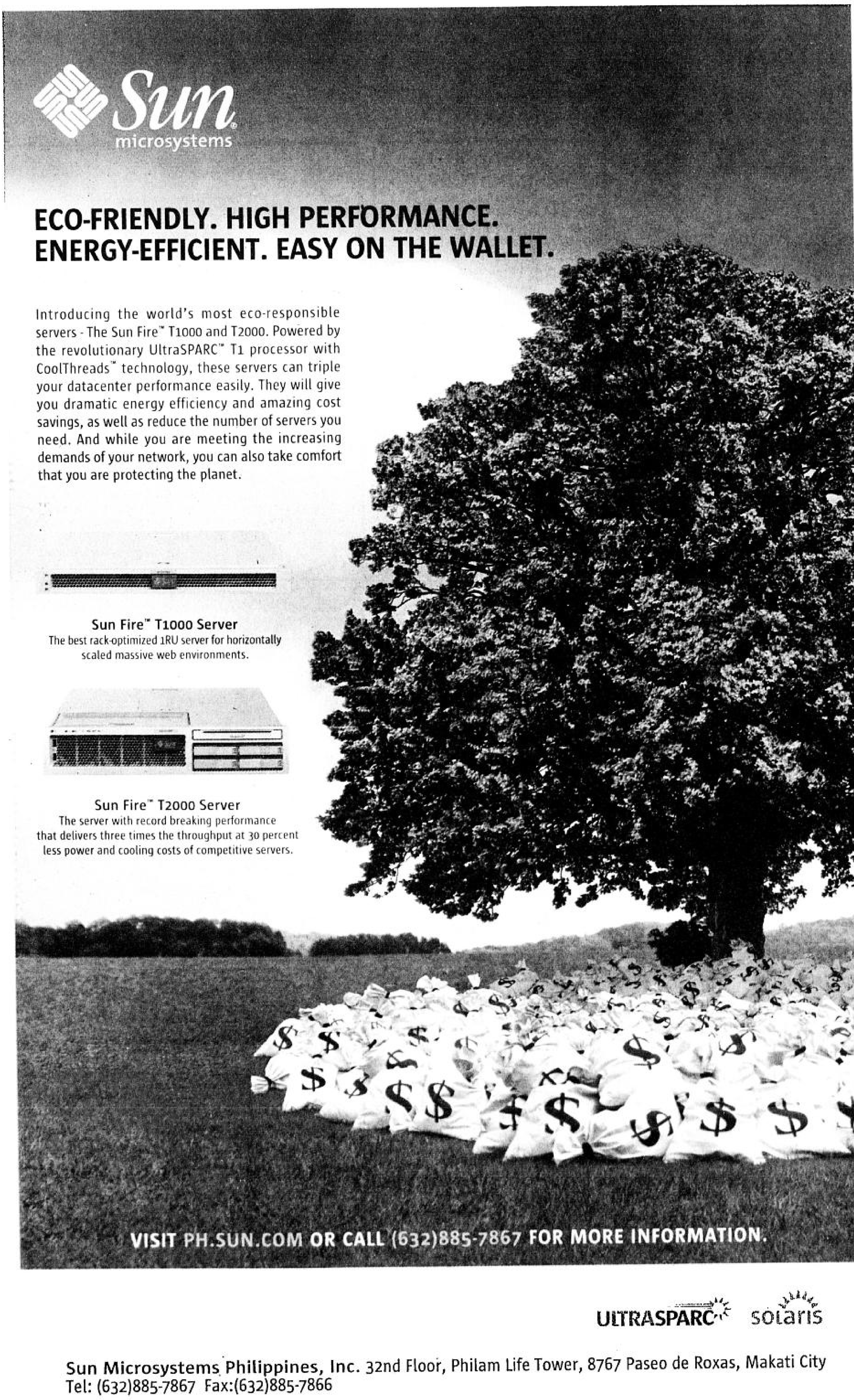
The NTC guideline has already opened up the Philippine VoIP market to value-added service providers, such as Internet service providers which can now begin offering VoIP without the need to apply for a congressional franchise.

A revised guideline was eventually issued by the NTC that identified parties that were allowed to offer VoIP services. This also required agreements between telecommunications carriers and Internet service providers (ISPs) regarding service performance standards, interconnection charges, access costs, as well as consumer security and privacy.

Prior to the NTC ruling, the Philippine telecommunications companies and value-added service providers, such as Internet service firms, were at loggerheads over the reclassification of VoIP as a value-added service.

The local telephone companies had been engaged in heated public debates with the NTC and the value-added service providers.

The NTC officials said, however, that the local telephone industry might contest its VoIP guidelines in local courts, as with previous controversial guidelines they have issued in the past.



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Options

NTC wants SMS spam deleted

NTC weighs move to temporarily bar 'spam' on SMS

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission (NTC) is weighing plans to temporarily disallow local operators from pushing broadcast text messages promoting products and services to local subscribers.

This came about with continuing complaints from local subscribers including one from Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, according to NTC Deputy Commissioner Jorge Sarmiento. Some complaints alleged that unwanted broadcast text messages charge subscribers once they receive them. Operators, however, denied this.

"We read about the senator's comments on text-based advertising. We have been meeting with local operators discussing plans to amend our guidelines on broadcast text messages. It needs more teeth," Sarmiento added.

"We might stop allowing them [operators] to send broadcast text messages to subscribers until we resolve this issue," the NTC official added.

In a public hearing last month, local operators have argued that its content providers are responsible for sending broadcast text messages to subscribers, not them. The NTC, however, rejected the operators' explanation, asking them to quickly resolve the issue.

"It is a lame excuse that they would blame content providers," added Sarmiento in an interview.

The NTC announced last month that it will revise an earlier set of rules on broadcast messaging after learning that local consumers are still getting "spammed" with unwanted text messages.

NTC Chair Ronald Solis said that some content providers of local mobile phone operators are not complying with the agency's policy on broadcast text messaging.

Possible revisions would include requiring content providers to use a common access number when sending broadcast text messages, the NTC chair said.

Under the existing NTC rules, mobile phone operators and content service providers are prohibited from sending unsolicited commercial text messages to local subscribers unless they have given their explicit permission to operators to subscribe them to the service.

The new regulation on text spam adopts an "opt-in" policy when dealing with unsolicited commercial text messages or text spam.

Under the NTC policy on broadcast messaging services, subscribers who have not opted-in into broadcast messaging services will not be charged for such messages they receive.

Subscribers who do not reply to these broadcast or pushed messages will be considered to have opted-out and such messages should be stopped or subscribers may opt-out without being charged, the NTC rules said.

The new rules also state that broadcast messages will not be sent between 9 p.m and 7 a.m, except for paid subscriptions.

The NTC will also require broadcast messages to display the names of the senders as well as the valid addresses or numbers, to which subscribers can send their requests to stop any broadcast messages.

The new rule on broadcast text messaging will apply to both short messaging service (SMS) and multimedia messaging service (MMS)-type of broadcast messages.

The NTC commissioners are set to meet next week to decide whether or not to temporarily disallow operators from sending broadcast text messages to subscribers.

MAGBAYAD NG TAMANG BUWIS
bago ang April 17 deadline.
7 DAYS TO GO
Ang Ating Kontribusyon Sa Solusyon

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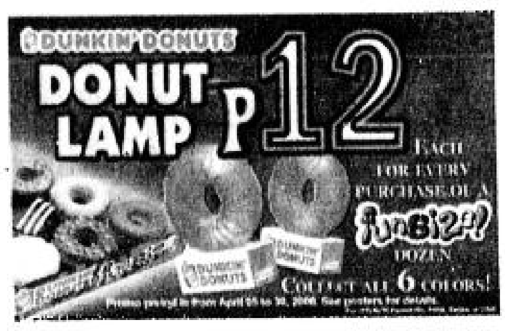
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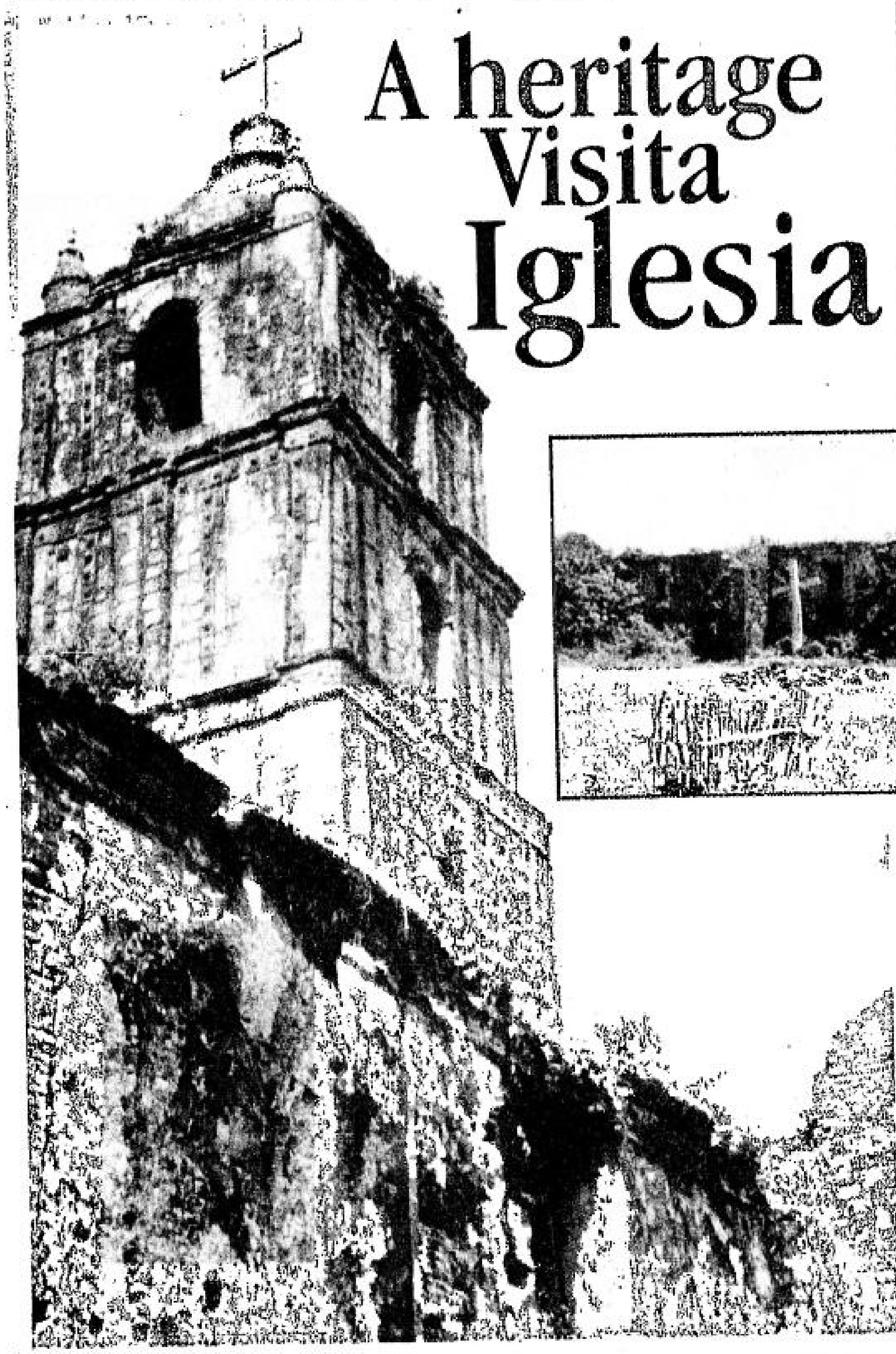
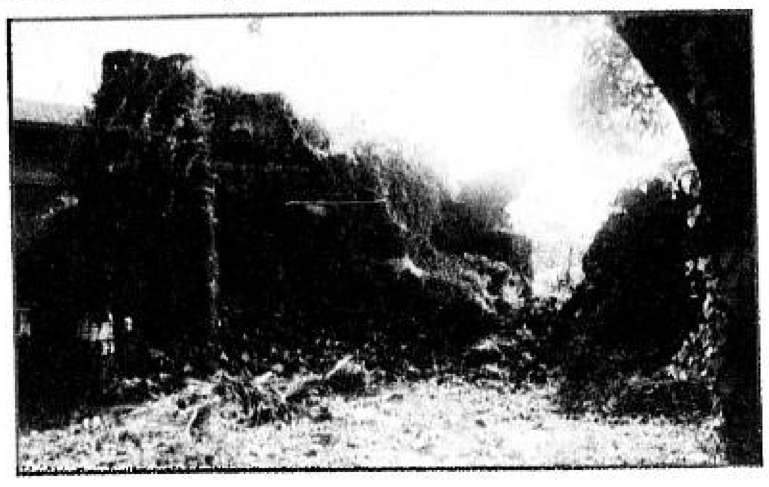
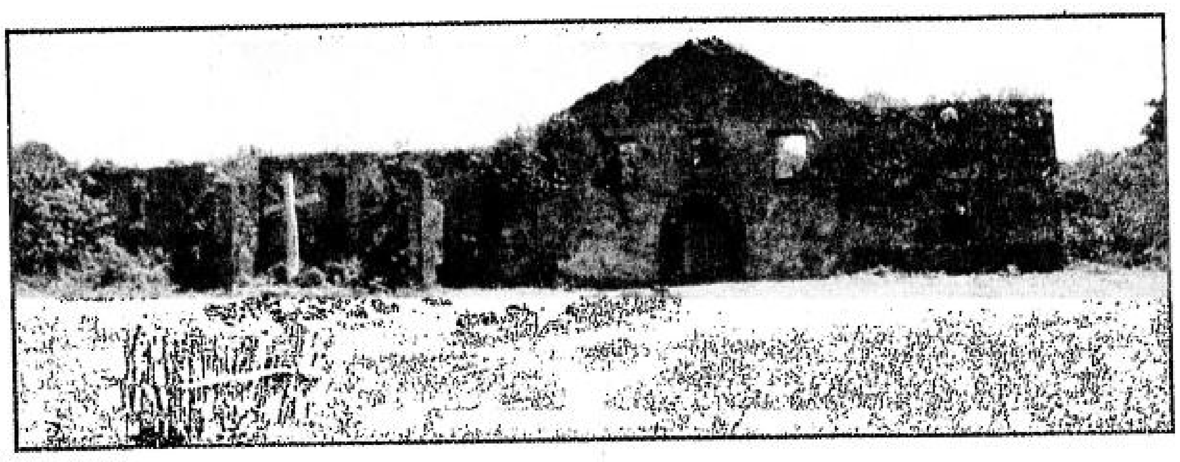
A heritage Visita Iglesia

Why not make the Stations of the Cross among the ruins of colonial churches in North Luzon?







CLOCKWISE from left: Cabagan Viejo, Isabela; San Jacinto de Cauili, Pangasinan; Fuga Island, Aparri, Cagayan

BELOW: Tabang, Santo Niño, Cagayan

Text and photos by
Manuel Maximo Lopez del Castillo-Noche
Contributor

THE TRADITIONAL VISITA Iglesias during the Holy Week is a pilgrimage that imaginatively follows the footsteps of our Lord in His journey through the streets of Jerusalem to the hill of Golgotha. It allows the Catholic devout to visit churches so as to participate in Christ's agony through the Stations of the Cross.

As there are 14 stations in the devotional, it would be ideal to visit 14 churches, although in my family, as far as I could remember, we visited only seven churches, making two stations per church.

Be that as it may, perhaps to make the Visita Iglesias a bit more challenging, a visit to ruined colonial churches would be a unique way of showing devotion and unction. Definitely it would be quite instructive and memorable.

The journey chosen for this route is the north loop heading toward Cagayan Valley and down the Ilocos Region.

Toward Cagayan Valley, one can find the remains of the church of Puncan in Carranglan, Nueva Ecija. Built in the early 18th century by the Augustinian missionaries, it was reduced to rubble by the powerful earthquake of 1990. Puncan can be reached through a short detour from Manila-Cagayan Road. It is approximately 20 kilometers from San Jose City.

Second station is the church of Bagabag, built during the early 19th century by the Dominican missionaries. Only the brick belfry now stands. A modern church has been erected where the original *convento* once stood.

Nothing much of the colonial church remains, but traces of it remain around the grounds of the new parish office. Bagabag can be reached via a short detour to Ifugao Road. From the junction, Bagabag is only roughly eight kilometers away. A feeder road back to Cagayan Valley Road is accessible from the town.

Third station is the spectacular Cabagan Viejo, now known as San Pablo, built by the Dominicans in 1730. The town once vied in importance and wealth with neighboring Tuguegarao and Tumauini in Isabela. It was abandoned when the rampaging waters of Rio Grande de Cagayan threatened the town; the people moved to the safer grounds of Cabagan Nuevo, today's Cabagan.

The ruins are impressive, with the church's carved coral stone edifice and four-level belfry still evident. San Pablo is along the national road toward Tuguegarao. Access to the church is through a short feeder road beside

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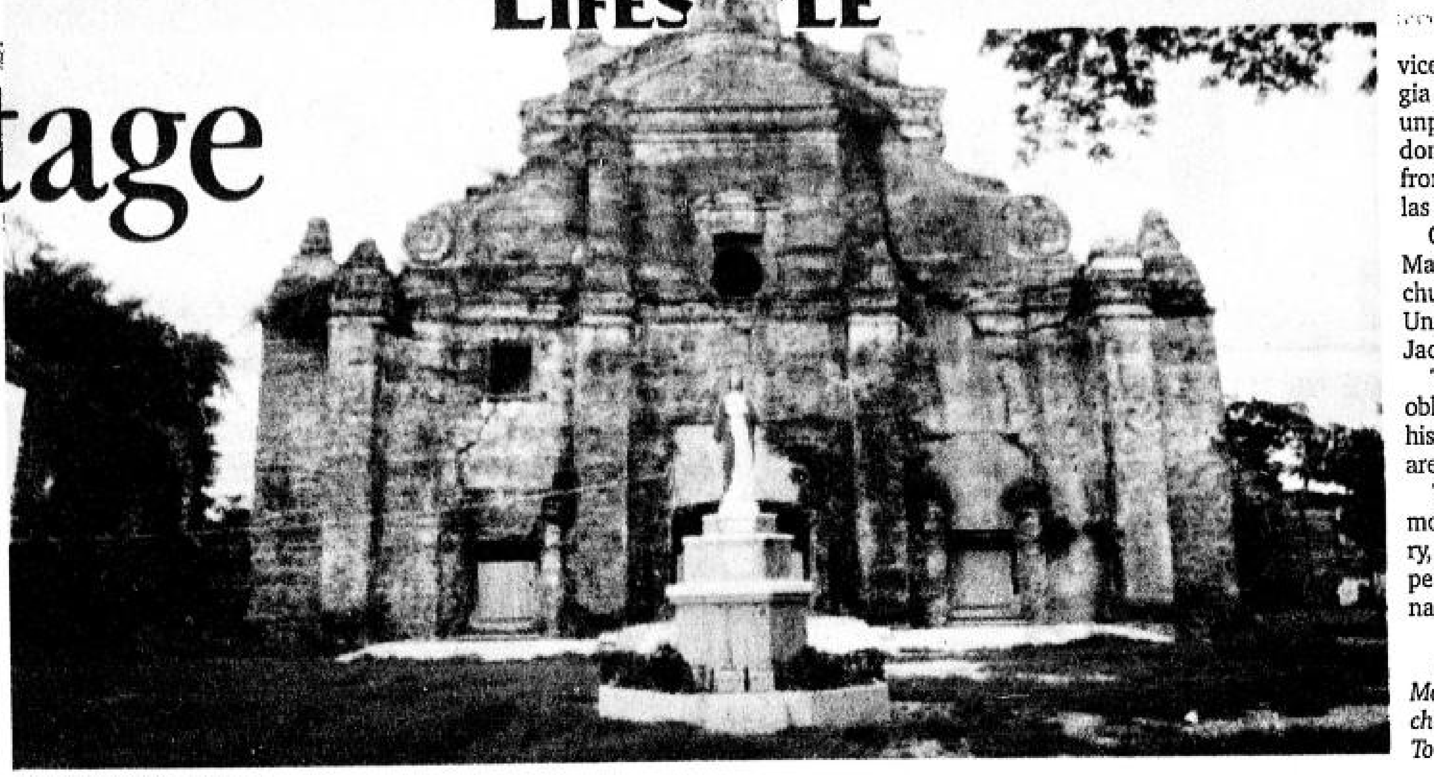
A heritage Visita Iglesia



DINGRAS, Ilocos Norte

From page C1

the cemetery, which also contains a ruined chapel.

Perhaps after an overnight stay in Tuguegarao, one should continue the *visita* with a trip to the famous shrine of Nuestra Señora de Visitacion de Piat.

Along the way, two ruins can be visited—those of Santa Ines de Montepulciano in Tabang, Santo Niño, formerly known as Faire; and those of Santo Domingo de Guzman in Piat. These are our fourth and fifth stations.

The ruins of Tabang are impressive though not as spectacular as Cabagan Viejo. Built in 1731, the church was destroyed when the town was flooded by the roaring water of Abulug River. Much of the walls of the church still stand though the façade is gone.

The Santo Domingo de Guzman in Piat has a different story. When the Ermita of Piat increasingly became more important due to its miraculous image, the town's main church decreased in significance so that it was subsequently abandoned and left to ruin. Today it has been integrated into the town's parish school where some of the walls remain standing.

Tabang is a short detour from the main road leading to the town of Santo Niño. Halfway through this rough road stands to the left the ruined church of Tabang. The ruins of the Santo Domingo are a short distance from the Piat shrine.

Sixth, seventh stations

Heading toward Aparri, one will pass the ruins of the church of Nassiping in Gattaran and the church of Camaliniugan.

Dedicated to San Miguel Arcangel, the church of Nassiping was built sometime in the 18th century by the Dominican missionaries. Dedicated to San Jacinto de Polonia, Camaliniugan's church was built in 1746. Both were abandoned when the overflowing river threatened the structure.

The church of Nassiping is along the national highway heading toward Gattaran, while the ruins of Camaliniugan are situated behind the present church of the town. Camaliniugan is also famous for its bell, which is the oldest in the country.

For the brave and the daring, an excursion to the eighth station is an adventure. The island of Fuga, almost three hours away from the mainland across Babuyan Channel, has a 17th-century church dedicated to Santo Domingo, which is in pristine condition with only the roof missing. It was also built by the Dominicans. There is no other way of getting to this island but by chartered *banca* from either Aparri or Claveria.

Before reaching Ilocos Norte, one may take the detour to the province of Apayao to visit two 17th-century ruins, our ninth and 10th stations, the first in the town of Pudtol and the other in the barrio of Capinatan. Both towns were mission outposts of the Dominicans, who built the structures as fortress churches to ward off the aggressive Itnegs in the 17th century.

The church of Capinatan, which is relatively in good condition, is dedicated to San Lorenzo, the early Christian martyr. Pudtol's is more damaged with only the rear and some parts of the lateral walls still standing. It was dedicated to Nuestra Señora del Pilar.

Apayao and Pudtol can be reached via the diversion road from Pamplona, Cagayan. The ruins of Pudtol stand beside the new church, while those of Capinatan are roughly 30 kilometers away toward the town of Kabugao.

11th station

Our 11th station is in the town of Bangui in Ilocos Norte. Situated in the *sitio* of Garadugód in the barrio of Taguipuro are the ruins of the church of San Jose.

PATA, Claveria, Cagayan

Relatively intact with only a roof missing, the ruins are covered with vines and shrubs, but the church can still be appreciated for its setting and general massing.

Access to the *sitio* is through a detour past the town of Bangui. Turn right toward Taguipuro and follow the road till you reach the river along which the ruins stand. Bangui is also noted for its wind-powered generators.

The 12th station is in the town of Pasuquin. Standing beside the new church are the remains of the colonial edifice, though today hidden from view by the cooperative building built inside.

Much of the convent building still stand though, and following the remains of the plans gives one an idea of the massiveness of the original structure. The church of Santiago el Mayor, Pasuquin, is along the national road leading to Bacarra and Laoag.

The 13th station is the church of the town of Solsona. The original town site was situated in the barrio of Santiago, where the church was built in the early 19th century. Unfortunately the nearby river overflowed and destroyed much of the church. Nothing much remains of it but a few brick stumps, though, like the one in Pasuquin, one could see the church's plans along the cultivated field, giving one an idea of how the church might have been like during its time. Solsona can be accessed through Vintar, Sarrat and Piddig.

The final station is the grandest of them all, the church of Dingras. Dedicated to San José, the church has been recently rededicated. Magnificent in scale and design, it was built in the 18th century along the Baroque style characterized by massive but graceful form.

The church is now used again for services, still exuding the feeling of nostalgia and romance, with its cracked and unplastered walls and overall abandoned look. Dingras is the next town from Solsona heading toward San Nicolas and Laoag.

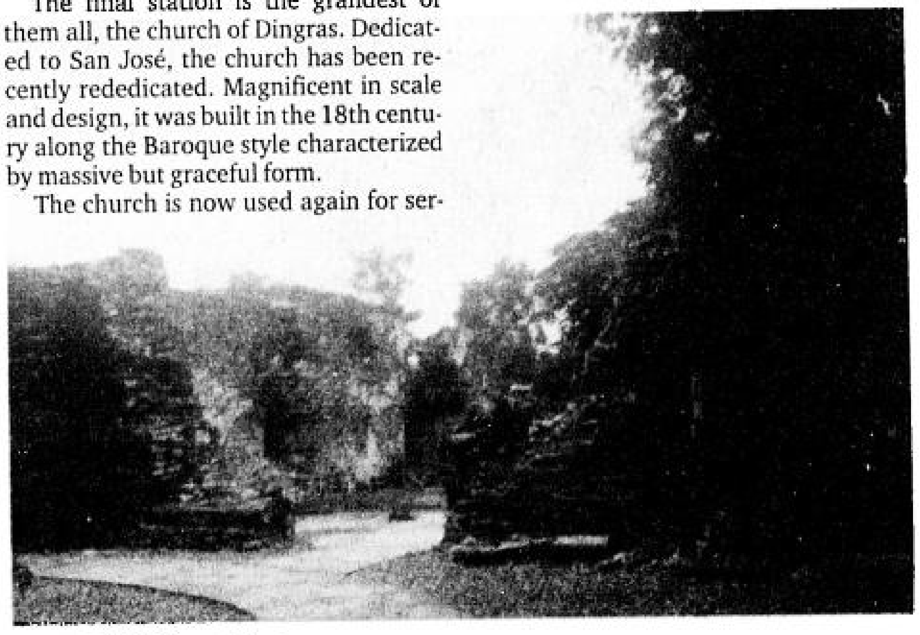
One may also visit the first church of Magsingal, Ilocos Sur; the ruins of the church of Pindangan in San Fernando, La Union; and the ruins of the church of San Jacinto de Cauili, Pangasinan.

The Visita Iglesia is not just a devotional obligation. It is also a teaching tool to the history of our country. The church ruins are silent witnesses to our faith.

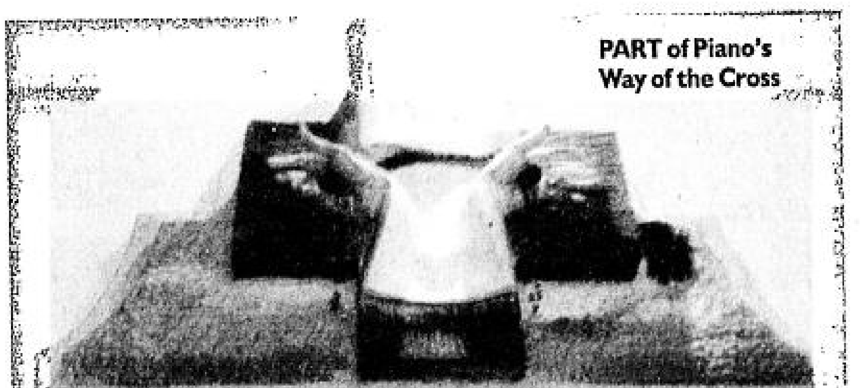
Through the devotional visits, these monuments are brought back from history, highlighting the importance of the people's faith for which they were originally built.

An architect and architecture historian, Manuel Noche teaches at the College of Architecture of the University of Santo Tomas.

CAPINATAN, Pudtol, Apayao



PASUQUIN, Ilocos Norte



XII THE DEATH OF JESUS

PART of Piano's Way of the Cross

The passion of Pancho Piano

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

EVOLVING FROM FIGURATION to abstraction, the art of Pancho Piano has taken on a more pronouncedly religious course, which is in keeping with the artist's personal advocacy of reinterpreting church liturgy as public art.

These past years, Piano has had his hands full doing ambitious projects in various religious sites, from private chapels to provincial cathedrals.

The Bicol-born artist's fame rests on his skills with glass, resin and fiberglass. Having previously worked as designer for Glasik, specializing in etched and painted glass, Piano has been advancing religious art in the country. He has become the toast of the ecclesiastical sector.

In February, Pasig Bishop Francisco San Diego unveiled a two-part, three-dimensional glass etching executed in the manner of the totem pole, which he had commissioned Piano for his chapel.

Instead of the tried-and-tested whipping-boy image, Piano resorted to symbolic hands to powerfully dramatize the various stages of Christ's Passion.

Measuring 3 ft x 10 ft each, Piano's twin glass-encased etchings reveal a more viewer-friendly image, both in the colors and the countenance of the subject. After the launch, Bishop San Diego asked the artist to do a more compact, indeed, integrative work on the subject, deleting all the gory aspects of Christ's suffering as seen in many traditional works.

With the redemptive message being infused into the new liturgy, Christ's Way likewise ends on a life-affirming note.

Piano's no-frills treatment of the Way of the Cross got the attention of Masbate Bishop Joel Z. Baylon. His 14-piece updated tableau, done in hardy yet friendly resin, now adorns the cavernous Masbate Cathedral, named after St. Anthony of Padua.

Though originally painted in a natural color, the works have since been repainted in various hues to minimize the gory spectacle and to give them more flesh than blood.

Piano had a similar project done in another medium, in the 14-piece painting collection for Dr. Lina Ago's private chapel in Legazpi City.

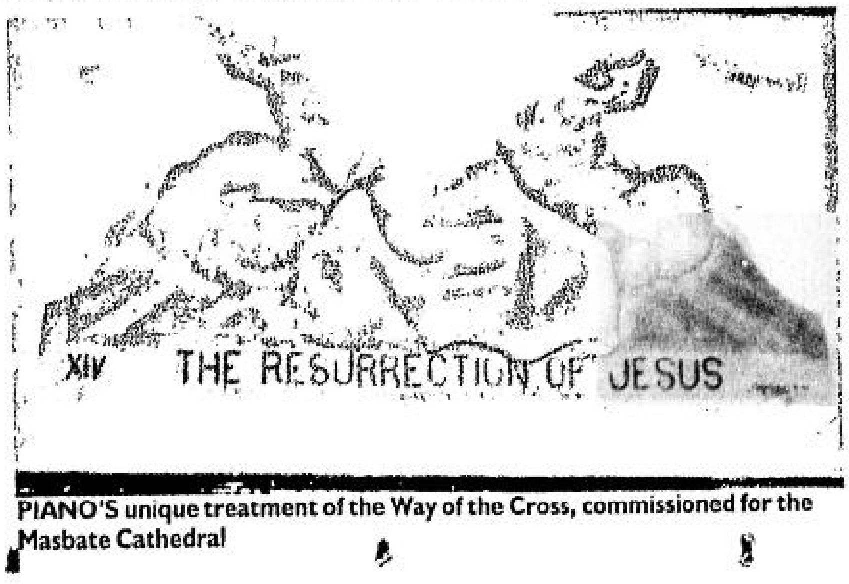
These works must have endeared the artist to other patrons, who see the need to update liturgical images in a more positive vein.

THE ARTIST beside a three-dimensional glass etching for Pasig Bishop Francisco San Diego

Also in keeping with Piano's art of the Passion, the Naga Cathedral has installed its Way of the Cross in the gardens surrounding the cathedral.

Piano also has a large-scale oil mural in the Lady of Annunciation Church on Mindanao Avenue, Quezon City. Though he hewed to traditional design, he sought to modernize it through composition and symbols.

E-mail author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com



XIV THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

PIANO'S unique treatment of the Way of the Cross, commissioned for the Masbate Cathedral

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Camarines Norte holds Bantayog festival

CAMARINES NORTE IS HOLDING THE Bantayog festival until April 16 in observance of the province's 86th founding anniversary.

The festival started April 3 with a motorcade around the capital town of Daet and neighboring municipalities, a visual-art exhibit featuring local artists, a tourism and trade fair, and an evening variety show.

There will be sporting events such as the Bantayog Climb on Mt. Balagbag; the Alay-Lakad Fun Walk; and the Gov. Jesus O. Typoco Jr. Drag Race Competition.

A concert will feature inspirational diva Jaime Rivera and the 6Cycle Mind band.

The festival culminates on April 16, Easter Sunday. There will be sociocivic military parade, float competition, native games and fireworks display. There will also be a grand street-dancing competition, showcasing the local festivals of the 12 municipalities.

According to Abel Icatlo, provincial tourism and cultural officer, the Bantayog festival was named after the first Rizal monument, built on Dec. 30, 1898, by Filipino revolutionaries. It is the first to be built in honor of Dr. José Rizal and antedates by 14 years the monument at Rizal Park, which was erected only in 1912.

He says the festival will also showcase Camarines Norte's attractions such as historical sites, gold-mining communities, pristine beaches, scenic roads, charming islands, as well as the townsfolk's innate hospitality.

Camarines Norte was created on April 15, 1920, by Executive Order No. 22.

Call (054) 7214341 or 0910-2346786.

More streetwalking...

From page C4

bu, who offers a link that takes us on a virtual walk through his city and other places in Cebu province which can be replicated on foot.

(Check http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=300832&page=1&pp=20.)

Sancover's itinerary and images for a do-it-yourself walking tour include the historic Colon Street Markers and the colonnaded American colonial period Cebu Normal School in downtown Cebu.

His images include stunning but threatened Cebuano churches in the southern coastal towns of Argao, Sibonga, and the shamelessly tarted-up Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral, a victim of unscrupulous "restoration" that deserves to be the national example of how to desecrate heritage.

Around the country

Heritage conservation professional Ivan Henares, who organized the successful San Fernando (Pampanga) Heritage Tourism Program, travels the country tirelessly. He yields heritage and natural sites tucked away in forgotten places.

Henares' blog is all about the wonders of our country. He also navigates visitors around different places, pointing out what there is to see and do, providing a comprehensive itinerary for do-it-yourself walks.

Visit his blog at http://ivanhenares.blogspot.com.

Another interesting heritage blog for sharing is "Icomos Philippines" (the Philippine Committee of the Paris-based International Council for Monuments and Sites), http://icomosphilippines.blogspot.com.

There is also "The Gabaldon Legacy," featuring heritage schoolhouses in the country, some of them being restored by the Heritage Conservation Society and the Department of Education. Check out http://gabaldon.blogspot.com.

Sancover's and Henares' materials are great for armchair (actually, computer-monitor) travel. The superior quality of their text and images is almost like being physically at the places they write about.

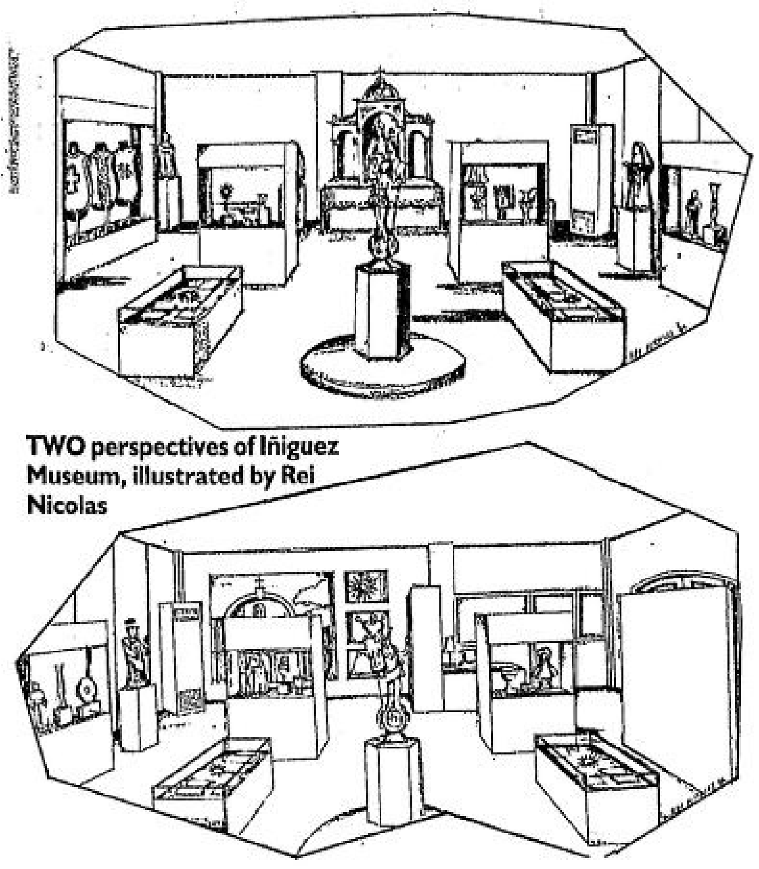
But there's no substitute for the real thing. This is the season to discover the abundance of heritage, history and nature in the Philippines instead of taking out your passport and traveling overseas.

Discovering the Philippines is essential for developing pride of place, and an opportunity to see for yourself how great the Philippines and the Filipinos are.

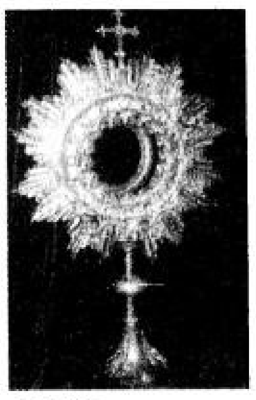
Seeing is believing. Therefore, I invite Mr. José Cruz for a walk in the closed Arroceros Forest Park where we can both breathe the fresh air generated by the forest of trees, proof that there is, indeed, a way to curb urban pollution and there's a way out of Manila's urban blight if private individuals would stop complaining and band together for the sake of our city and to improve quality of life.

Feedback is welcome at afvillalon@hotmail.com

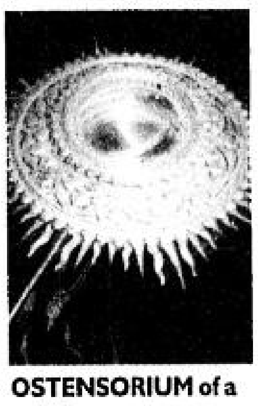
Iba opens church museum



TWO perspectives of Iñiguez Museum, illustrated by Rei Nicolas

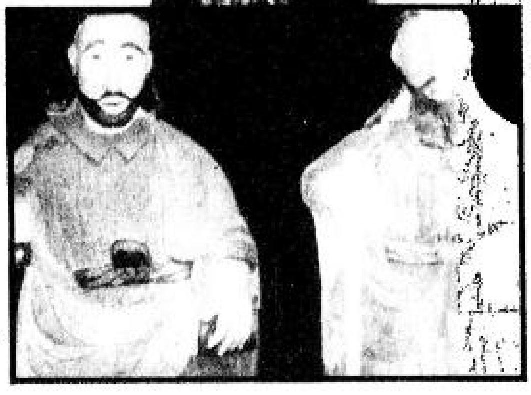


GILDED monstrance with rhinestones



OSTENSORIUM of a gothic monstrance, early 20th century

VICE Mayor Benjamin Farin Jr., Fr. Noriel Salvador and curator Rei Nicolas



SAN Pedro y Pablo icons of coral stone, probably from the 17th century, originally placed in front of the church

THE PAYNAUEN-DUYAN FESTIVAL OF Iba, Zambales, which commemorates the provincial capital's 395th foundation, begins on April 19. Paynauen, a word of Zambal origin, means rest or *pahingahan*, which was the ancient name of Iba before the Spanish conquistadores founded the village on the shore of the Bancal River in 1611.

The week-long festival, a brainchild of founding chair, Vice Mayor Benjamin Farin Jr., is directed this year by Gino Marasigan. An agro-industrial fair and the inauguration of the Bishop Deogracias S. Iñiguez Museum will kick off the five-day festivities of sports, songs, dances and various art competitions.

The new museum on the ground floor of the Bishop Byrne Diocesan Pastoral Center was designed by Rei Gana Nicolas and will serve not only as a permanent repository of religious art of the Diocesan Commission on Archives and Museum headed by Fr. Orlando Correa, but also as a venue for seasonal exhibits showcasing the religious and cultural heritage of the region.

Consistent with his understated but elegant style, Nicolas used simple lines and dignified colors to shape and utilize every nook and cranny of the new museum facility.

Reminiscent of the Museo de Sto. Domingo in Quezon City, which Nicolas originally designed and organized, the Iñiguez Museum features some interesting pieces such as the primitive renditions of San Pedro y Pablo in coral stone, which probably date back to the 17th century. There is also an interesting vintage photograph of the Flores de Mayo participants inside the church, circa 1929.

Iba Bishop Florentino Lavarias, together with Bishop Iñiguez, will bless the new museum and open the inaugural exhibit put together by Nicolas. Gino Marasigan will provide the floral arrangements. They will be assisted by Fr. Nonel Salvador, parish priest of the San Agustin Cathedral; Luis Cabal, coordinator; and Henedina de La Paz, the chancery secretary who provided valuable information about the history of the Iba festival.

According to De la Paz, when the Spanish missionaries arrived in 1607, they began the task of educating the Zambals in the faith by calling them to live in the lowlands. The *reduccion*, or the town settlement program, was implemented. The natives were "congregated" in the town to facilitate evangelization and control. The town of Iba, originally known as Paynauen, was established in 1611 by the Augustinian Recollects (OAR). The name of the town is believed to have come from the Iba plant which used to grow in the area.

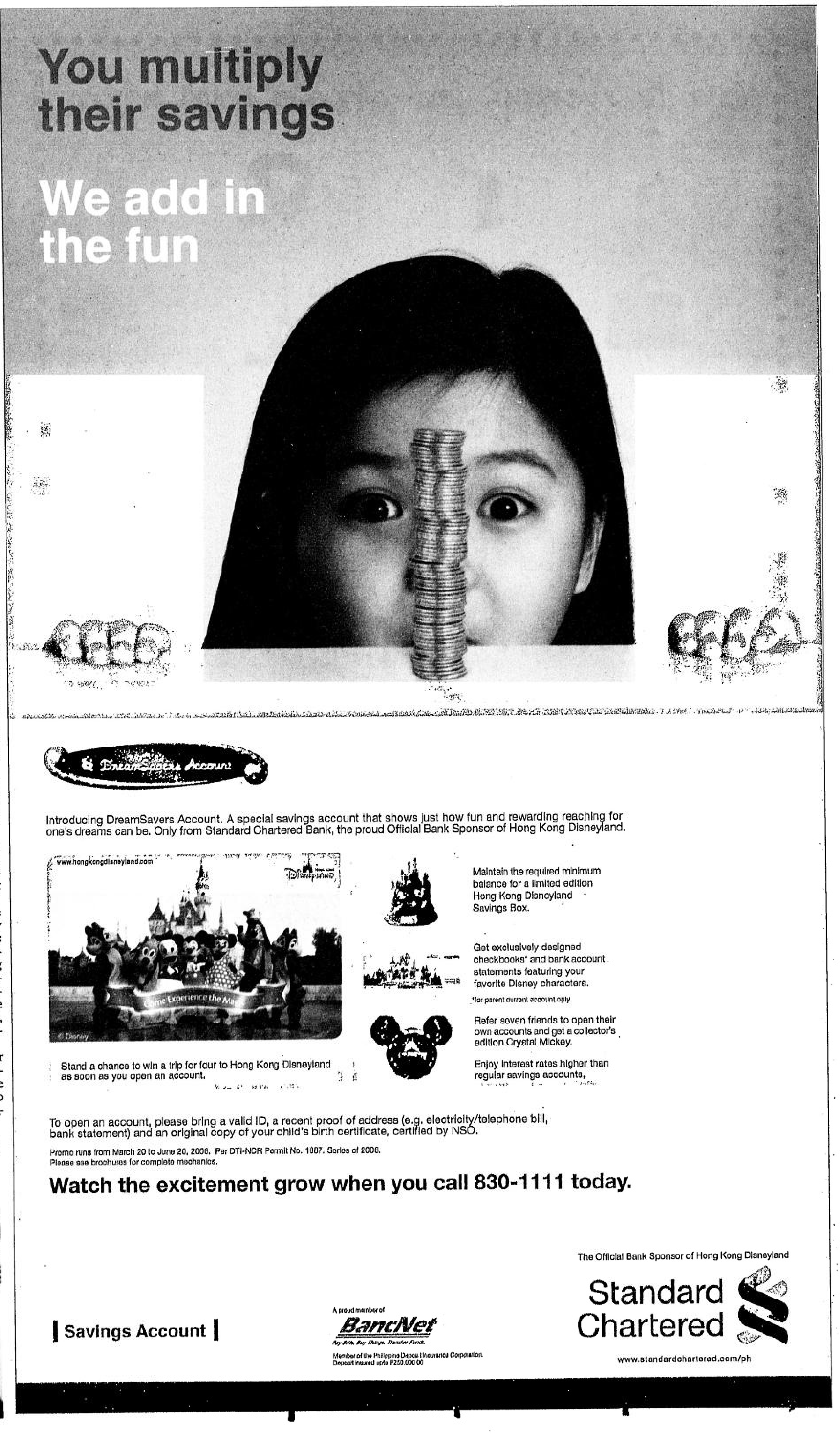
Though the Recollects were the first missionaries to arrive in Zambales, the Dominicans (OP), who arrived in 1679, were the ones who founded the parish and dedicated the church to St. Augustine of Hippo in 1681.

Despite the combined efforts of the Recollects and Dominicans in the 17th and 18th centuries, majority of the natives refused to live in fixed villages which made evangelization difficult if not impossible.

In 1925, with the arrival of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) fathers, more missionary work was done in Iba and San Narciso. The SVDs gradually took over the other towns and parishes, concentrating their work on establishing more parishes and rebuilding the "church" ruined by the revolution and divided by the Aglipayan schism. They put up large *conventos*, one of them being the existing parish convent of Iba, to serve as Sunday schools for children and catechetical centers for adults.

In December 1951, the parish of Iba, together with the parishes of San Narciso, San Felipe, Cabangan and Botolan, was turned over to the Columban Fathers. In 1987, Msgr. Crisostomo Cacho became the first Filipino clergyman to become parish priest of Iba.

"RESURRECION," a 19th-century image used in the traditional *salubong*



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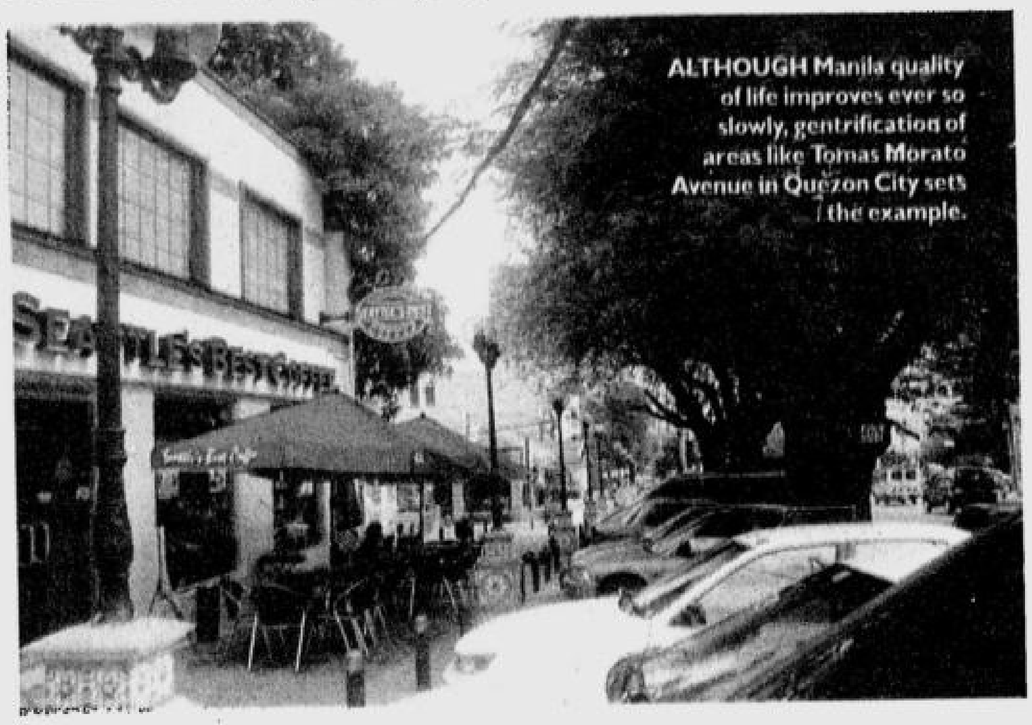
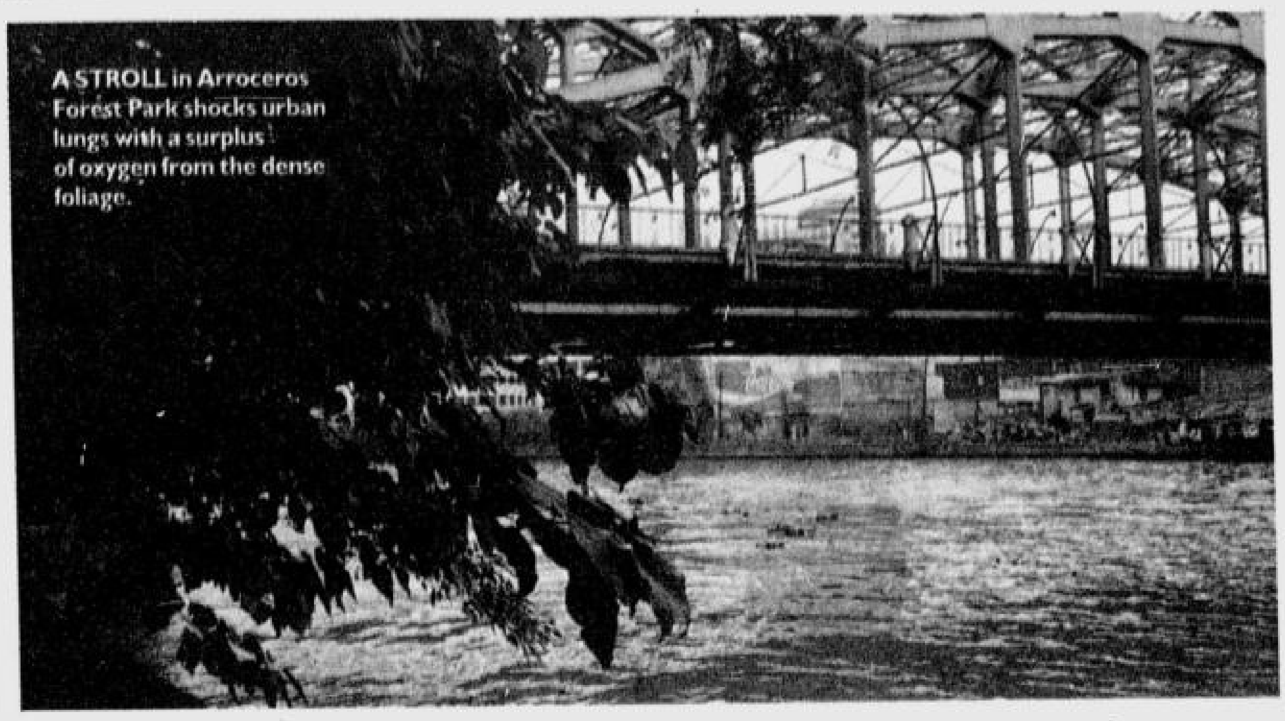


ALTHOUGH Manila quality of life improves ever so slowly, gentrification of areas like Tomas Morato Avenue in Quezon City sets the example.



A STROLL in Arroceros Forest Park shocks urban lungs with a surplus of oxygen from the dense foliage.

More streetwalking discoveries

Irate reader says Manila hopeless and is 'better wiped out from the face of the earth'

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

DEAR MR. VILLALON,

As much as I would like to see Manila reborn, this city is better wiped out from the face of the earth.

It is a garbage dump, a sewer pit, poverty center, corruption capital, traffic gridlock and pollution paradise. It has to be the worst city in Southeast Asia, worse than Hanoi.

I don't know why people here [in Manila] are stupid and pathetic enough to still justify living here and finding beauty in all the soot and stink.

A walking tour? *Sige nga*, where else can you have a tour except in the Binondo-Ermita area? Do you think I would like to walk along Edsa? I'd rather walk along Khao San or Silom in BKK than here. Colon Street in Cebu or Rizal Blvd. in Dumaguete has more character than the Boardwalk.

So, it's rather funny to see people trumpeting the beauty of this dying carcass of a metropolis, because everyone knows that a garbage can is a garbage can, and no matter how you beautify it, it still stinks and looks like a garbage can.

A stroll along the closed Arroceros Park? Hello! That is, if you want to die of lung cancer!

JOSÉ CRUZ
holyrambutan@gmail.com

The message above was a reader's passionate reaction to last week's column on "streetwalking discoveries" around Manila.

Mr. Cruz also sent a second e-mail, suggesting that walking tour itineraries of other cities be published since "it's better to kill this city [Manila]. It's hopeless."

I am a resolutely hopeful advocate of heritage, but last week's column on summer streetwalking discoveries brought surprising feedback from individuals who have taken the time to discover and document what is special in their cities. They eagerly share their pride of place with us.

Cagayan de Oro walk

INQUIRER columnist Antonio J. Montalvan II e-mailed about walking through his native Cagayan de Oro:

"There is now a walking tour in Cagayan de Oro. It is run by a group of local travel operators who conceptualized the walk after consultation with us.

"The tour brings one to the city's Spanish and American colonial heritage places: the 1845 St. Augustine Cathedral; the plaza across it where there is a National Historical Institute marker on the April 7, 1900, Battle of Cagayan; the 1939 City Hall building; the 1901 Plaza Divisoria where there is a 1916 Rizal monument fabricated in Carriedo; and Museo de Oro inside Xavier University which contains one of only three extant copies of the menu card for Aguinaldo's inaugural dinner in Malolos."

It is not just urban history for walkers joining the Cagayan de Oro tour. There is an environmental experience as well.

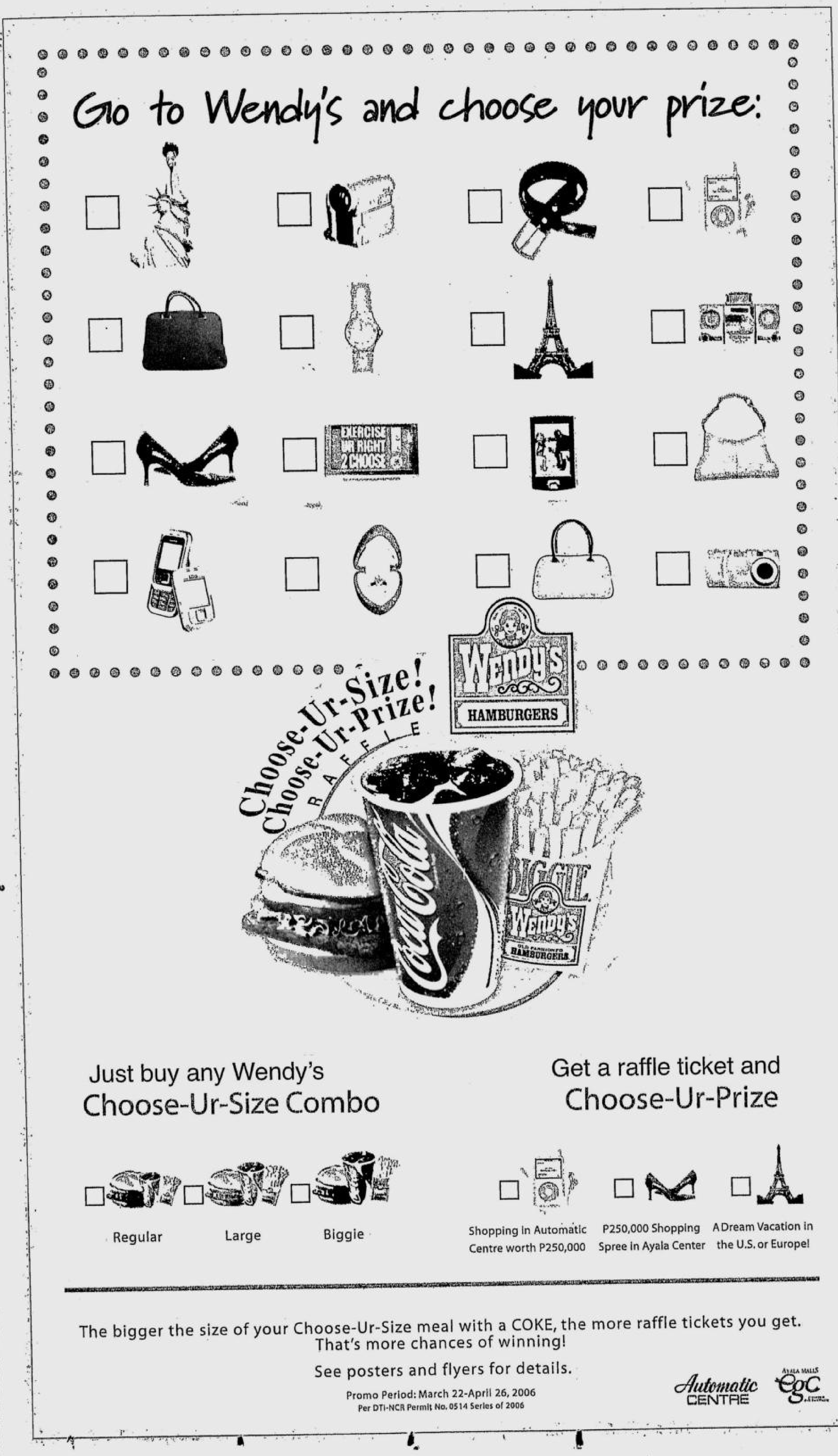
Montalvan writes: "From the museum, tour participants are then treated to a kayak ride on Cagayan River which passes the Huluga site, one of the premier archaeological sites in the country, and ends in Carmen Bridge behind St. Augustine Cathedral and City Hall. The bridge is the site of the late 1800s Puente del General Ramon Blanco, which collapsed on the day of its inauguration."

Cagayan de Oro Outfitters is a private tour group composed of local travel operators that organizes the walks. The organizers are women in their 30s, Reina Olavides Bontuyan, Chisum Factura, and Lilet Bioco. The tour costs P550 per person. Contact them at cdo_outfitters@yahoo.com or 0917-7081568.

Cebu walk

"I love history," e-mailed Mr. Sancover of Ce-

MORE/ C2



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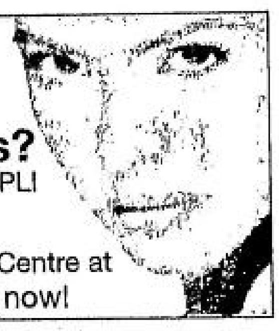

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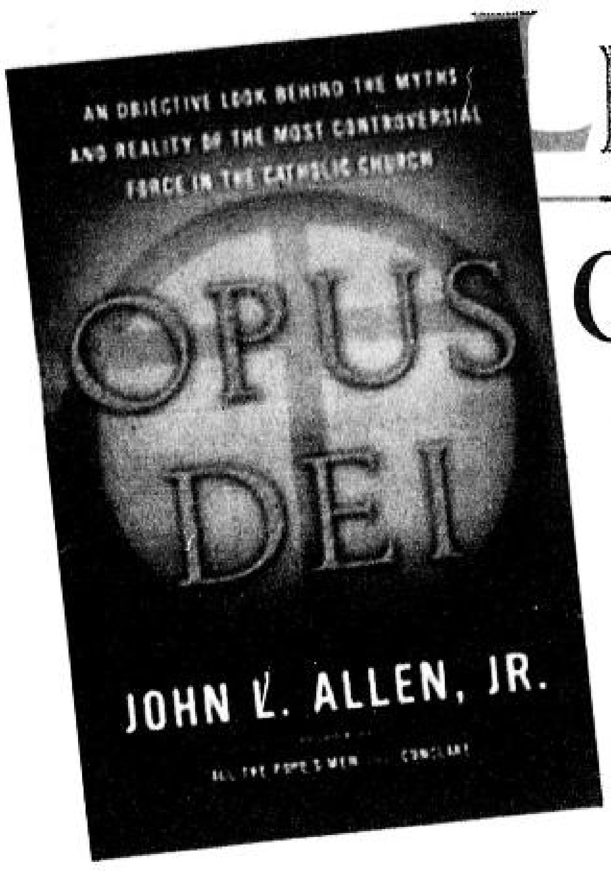
AN OBJECTIVE LOOK BEHIND THE MYTHS AND REALITY OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL FORCE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
OPUS DEI
JOHN L. ALLEN, JR.

Opus Dei, beyond 'Da Vinci Code'

Respected Vatican watcher John Allen comes to the rescue of the oft-misunderstood Catholic movement

By Christian V. Esguerra

A MASONIC GROUP. A shadowy,. right-wing Catholic organization out to control Christendom. A society of blind obedience, of the rich and the powerful. A church within a church. A cult. The smear goes on and on.

Thanks to Dan Brown's literary wrecking machine that gullible readers have blindly embraced, the controversial Catholic group Opus Dei has come under even more suspicion, if not under siege.

But what really is the truth about Opus Dei?

Veteran Vatican watcher John Allen Jr. treads on dangerous path, providing important answers in his new book, "Opus Dei: An Objective Look Behind the Myths and Reality of the Most Controversial Force in the Catholic Church."

It is arguably the most objective book written by a non-member so far on the group founded by St. Josémaria Escriva more than seven decades ago.

It brings out in the open basically all major questions about Opus Dei—from its fabled secrecy, immense wealth, voracious recruitment, to the use of a spiked chain for corporal mortification (again, thanks, Dan).

The belief is that, on Oct. 2, 1928, Opus Dei ("Work of God" in Latin) revealed itself to Escriva, then a young Spanish priest. It was said that God wanted him to come up with a community of believers who would "redeem the world, not by retreating from it, but by Christianizing it," Allen explains.

Since then, everything about the group, the idea of "sanctification of work," the establishment of Opus Dei

OPUS/D2

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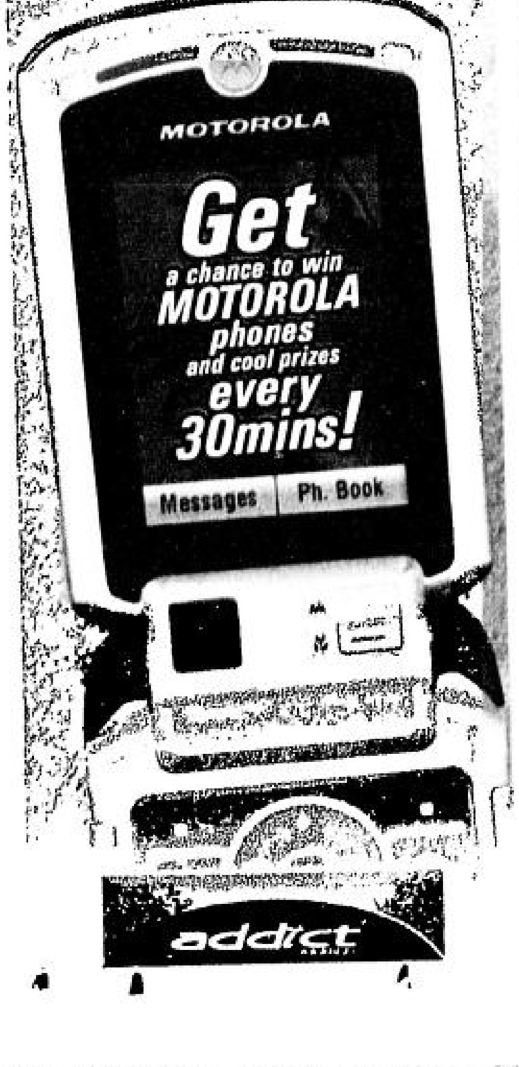

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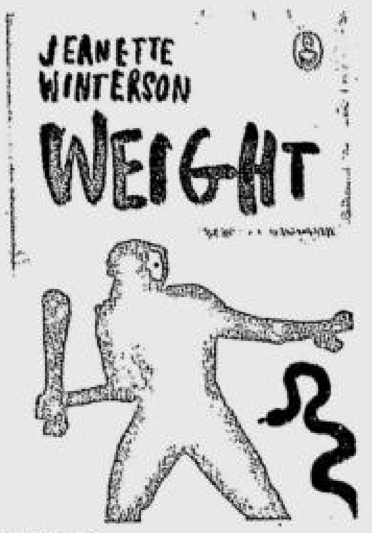
Illuminations
Life and Its Passages
Words by
Images by

"ILLUMINATIONS: Life and Its Passages" is a collection of spiritual reflections on art, beauty, life, love and God, written by Armando S. Baltazar. The elegant photographs are by Franco M. Patriarca. Handsomely printed, the book makes an ideal gift for Easter. Part of the proceeds from the sale will go to Ang Arko ng Pilipinas, a home for mentally challenged children. Call the MCO Foundation Secretariat at 8784359 or 8407000 local 2630



"Weight"
Jeanette Winterson

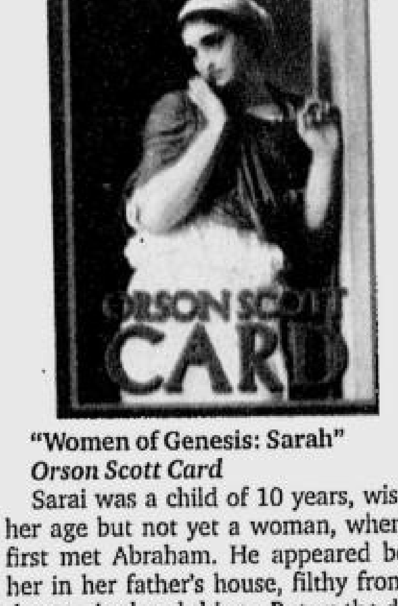
WITH HER TYPICAL WIT AND VERVE, Jeanette Winterson brings Atlas into the 21st century. Simultaneously she asks her own difficult questions about the nature of choice and coercion and how we forge our own destiny. Visionary and inventive, yet completely believable and relevant to our lives today, Winterson's skill in turning the familiar on its head and showing us a different truth is once more put to dazzling effect.

A RIVETING STORY OF LOVE AND DESTINY FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
ORSON SCOTT CARD
REBEKAH
WOMEN OF GENESIS

"Women of Genesis: Rebekah"
Orson Scott Card

Born into a time and place where a woman spoke her mind at her peril, and reared as a motherless child by a doting father, Rebekah grew up to be a stunning, headstrong beauty. She was chosen by God for a special destiny.

For Rebekah must leave her father's house to marry Isaac, the studious young son of the patriarch Abraham. Her struggle to find her place in the family of Abraham was a true test of her faith, but through it all she found her own relationship with God and did her best to serve His cause in the lives of those she loved.



"Women of Genesis: Sarah"
Orson Scott Card

Sarai was a child of 10 years, wise for her age but not yet a woman, when she first met Abraham. He appeared before her in her father's house, filthy from the desert, tired and thirsty. But as the dirt of travel was washed from his body, the sight of him filled her heart. And when Abraham promised to Sarai to return in 10 years to take her for his wife, her fate was sealed. They were wed, and so joined the royal house of Ur with the high priesthood of the Hebrews. With the blessing of their God, a great nation would be built around the core of their love.

Available at National Book Store.

Mr. & Ms. marks 30 years

MR. & MS. CELEBRATES ITS 30TH year in its April issue.

Top stars Dennis Trillo and Angel Locsin are the cover couple.

In celebration of its Pearl Year, Mr. & Ms. tackles the history and magnificence of the precious pearl. Did you know that pearls are used as aphrodisiacs? Read the article, "Pearl of the Orient."

An article reviews the many fortune-bearing plants that one can tend in the garden.

A hundred ways to foretell the future are offered in "Divination: The A-Z of Predicting Your Life." Know about runes, crystal balls, numerology, cartomancy and tea leaves that may say a thing or two about your future.

Jaime Licauco discusses elementals in his column on the paranormal.

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza shares a truly creepy ghost story which happened to a friend while driving on a busy road.

Resident psychic Madame Annie talks about miracles and magic.

Interesting celebrities featured are comedian Ai Ai de las Alas, teen actress Bea Alonzo, popular band Orange and Lemons, sexy VJ Iya Villania and controversial actor Rustom Padilla.

Entertainment columnists Ethel Ramos and Ronald Constantino tackle local and foreign show biz happenings.

Other features focus on the coffee and tea craze, new diet trends, Boracay and wrestling.

Also read about the arts in Angono, artist Anita Magsaysay-Ho, Sen. Joker Arroyo, Deep Nerve Therapy, and feng shui.

Anniversary Issue on the Body, Mind and Spirit
Mr.&Ms.
30th
Dennis Trillo and Angel Locsin
shop &dine

Metro features Lacroix gowns and Manila night-life denizens

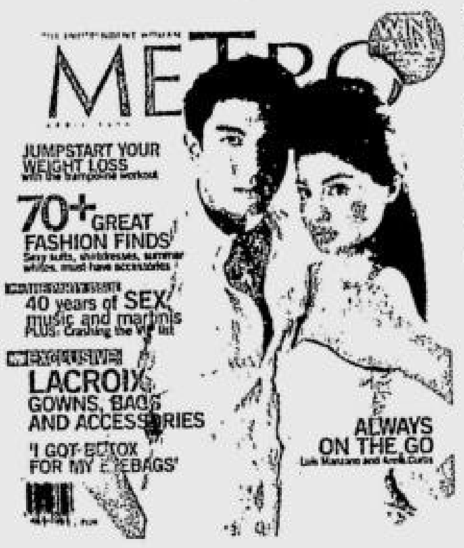
METRO MARKS ITS 16TH ANNIVERSARY with its April issue. Luis Manzano and Anne Curtis are on the cover, with Curtis on the inside pages modeling gorgeous outfits from the Christian Lacroix exhibit in Manila.

Meet the mavericks of Philippine night life—from club owner Erik Cua to party planner Alessandra Tinio—in David Nugent's juicy investigation of Manila night life.

Party fixture and stylist Larry Leviste looks back on four decades of partying, from the '70s to the present.

On the fashion pages, set yourself free in the hottest caftans and get some Spanish fire with ruffles and flounces.

Master the sunless tan for summer beauty, drop in on a discussion with single moms about love and sex, and get back on that mini-trampoline for the revival of the fun workout.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EXCLUSIVE LACROIX GOWNS, BAGS AND ACCESSORIES
'I GOT BOTOX FOR MY EYEBAGS'
ALWAYS ON THE GO

Metro Society features this year's best dressed men in an issue packed with the latest news on current trends and the most exclusive events in Manila, Cebu, Davao, Bacolod and Baguio. A special interview features the six Lagdameo brothers who grace the cover of this issue.

Dining finds include Edsa Shang's Paparazzi, Herald Suites Coca Café and Cebu's Guiseppe's.

There is a colorful supplement on Baguio and the Mansion House, Baguio Country Club, and Manor at Camp John Hay.

The art and science of displaying pictures and objects is tackled in the latest issue of Metro Home & Entertaining.

Daphne Oseña Paez learns much from an interior designer who specializes in displaying family photographs.

Interior designer Trisha Bermudez accomplishes a dramatic makeover on a tight budget.

Matteo Guidicelli graces the cover of MetroActive's first installment for 2006. The 15-year-old karting champion talks about school, his numerous commercial endorsements and his future.

Two-time LPGA Tour winner Jennifer Rosales reveals her extreme side and TJ Manotoc gives us a number of reasons why we should think twice about diet sodas.

The magazines from the Metro Group are available at magazine outlets and newsstands nationwide.

Casa San Miguel opens 13th Pundaquit Festival

THE CENTER FOR THE ARTS IN SAN Antonio (Casa San Miguel) Foundation is holding the 13th Season of the Pundaquit Festival with a month-long series of evening concerts at its sprawling mango orchard in San Antonio, Zambales.

The season opens on April 14 with the traditional Good Friday concert of Franz Joseph Haydn's "Seven Last Words" as rendered by the Pundaquit Virtuosi, resident ensemble of Casa San Miguel.

On April 15, Black Saturday, Casa San Miguel exhibits its community mural and the Borlongan Collection. Featured visual artists are Plet Bolipata, Marc Cosico, Carlo Gabucó, Leeroy New, Zaniel Mariano, Daniel Querijero, Don Salubayba, and Paeng Zamora, as well as CJ Tayoto, Michaelangelo Tayoto and Brendale Tadeo.

Prized cellist Renato Lucas takes center stage with the Pundaquit Virtuosi on May 5. They will render the music of Debussy, Dvorak and Beethoven.

Renowned pianist Raul Sunico teams up with Coke Bolipata, founder and artistic director of the music festival, and the Pundaquit Virtuosi on May 6. They will play Smetana, Brahms, and the rarely-played Concerto for Piano, Violin and String Quartet of Chausson.

The Mandaluyong Children's Choir under choirmaster Sebastian Trinidad will perform on May 20, following a weeklong workshop.

On May 26, the festival will feature the dance concert "Order for Masks," featuring the Myra Beltran Dance Forum.

The festival draws to a close on May 27 with a Mass and concert in memory of Ricardo K. Bolipata

The 13th season of the Pundaquit Festival is supported by Siemens, Citigroup and Metrobank. Concerts are free and open to the public. Call 903-8657 and 9332392, e-mail cokebolipata@yahoo.com or log on to www.casasanmiguel.ph.

COKE Bolipata

Peta summer workshops

SUMMER IS THE PERFECT time to get those creative juices flowing, meet new friends and show off that hidden talent. And the Philippine Educational Theater Association (Peta) annual Summer Theater Arts Workshop is just the right venue to bring out your creative side.

Peta offers workshops using a tried and tested pedagogy designed to uncover the creative potential in each participant. There are several courses to choose from: Children's Theater 1, Children's Theater 2, Teen Theater, Theater Arts 1, Basic Acting, Creative Musical Theater and Theater in Education.

Call 7256244 and 7218604, or visit the Peta Theater Center at 5 Sunnyside Drive, Brgy. Kristong Hari, Quezon City (right at the back of the Quezon City Sports Club). Look for Vida Nael, Anná Catamora or Jeff Hernandez. Classes run April 18-May 13.

Adventist Philharmonic holds summer camp

THE ADVENTIST PHILHARMONIC Orchestra Development Program announces its six-week summer camp, which starts April 10 and ends with a culminating concert on May 21.

The concert will feature Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor with Dr. Ingrid Santamaria as soloist; works by Col. Antonino Buenaventura commemorating the National Artist's 10th death anniversary and Maestra Rizalina's 88th birth year; and Mozart's "Il re Pastore" overture to celebrate his 250th birth year.

The orchestra camp will be held at the new College of Music building of the Adventist University of the Philippines, Silang, Cavite (near Santa Rosa, Laguna), Mondays to Thursdays, 10 a.m.-12 noon. Call Jonathan Arevalo Coo at 0921-2172617.

Opus Dei, beyond 'Da Vinci Code'

From page D1

centers in 62 countries and branches for male and female members, for instance, was said to have materialized from this vision.

Unlike previous books on Opus Dei, Allen's takes pains to avoid rash judgments. There's just too many of them already. He instead probes Opus Dei—its spirituality, structure, affairs, especially the imperfections—with tried and tested journalistic tools.

In "Opus Dei," we're probably brought as close to the truth as possible about the organization. We're allowed an untarnished view of what really goes on in this global organization of 84,491 members, including 1,850 priests.

In the end, it may seem that Allen appears defending Opus Dei without probably meaning to. Good thing his reputation precedes him.

Allen, a columnist at the progressive National Catholic Reporter, writes that he has spent more than 300 hours and flown tens of thousands of miles to interview both "friends and foes" of Opus Dei.

Opus Dei's not "especially secretive," Allen found out during the course of his research. He prefers to call the perceived secrecy as "traditional reticence." The attitude might have resulted from the "early controversies in Spain in the late 1930s and 1940s, when Opus Dei was accused of Masonry, bizarre rituals and heresy," he explains.

Add to these Escriva's problems of trying to "fit" his group into Canon Law, he says. The future saint had to work on this for decades since the existing law had no provision for a group made up of priests and laymen all seeking to be "contemplatives in the middle of the world."

It wasn't until John Paul II granted a "personal prelature" status on Opus Dei in 1982 that it got its legal identity. But even that didn't put the controversies to rest.

Elitist?

"The Work" enjoins members to immerse themselves in the world. They work as professionals like lawyers, doctors, teachers, bankers, architects and journalists, all with the clear perspective that one need not be a saint to live a saintly life.

And, no, it's not exactly an elitist circle though Escriva was known to have evangelized heavily among intellectuals and professionals. Membership is common also among those belonging to the lower economic bracket—barbers, dishwashers and drivers, for instance.

"Sanctify your work. Sanctify yourself in your work. Sanctify others through your work" is Escriva's short formula, Allen writes.

The idea somehow prefigured the "universal call to holiness" galvanized as an official Church teaching during the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), he says.

A nagging mystery Dan Brown apparently cashed in concerns the use of "cilice," a spiked chain worn around the upper thigh for two hours daily. Truth is, only about 30 percent of the members (or the celibate numeraries) do this. But Catholic bashers like Brown never cared to explain.

The practice is also neither a secret nor exclusive to Opus.

"In the 20th century, famous saints such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Padre Pio had both worn the cilice and used the discipline (a cord-like whip)," Allen writes.

Gender equality is another issue against Opus Dei. That's because numerary assistants, or those in charge of the domestic care of Opus Dei centers and other facilities, are women, about 4,000 of them.

No big deal, really.

"Women are different from men in their way of doing things—more intuitive, more concrete," Margherita Salas, a numerary assistant from Rome, explains to Allen. "In domestic work, I think women can give a little something extra."

Affluent?

Far more serious allegations against Opus Dei center on its alleged affluence (what with the classy, 17-story headquarters in New York), and its purportedly heavy influence on the Catholic hierarchy and secular politics.

Allen gives us an idea of how "rich" Opus Dei really is, not based on its posh buildings and sassy projects, but on actual numbers. With the help of an expert in church accounting, he pegs the value at only $2.8 billion, probably the same as that of a mid-sized American diocese.

Allen's findings generally conform with the perception that Opus Dei is a conservative Catholic group. It's conservative in the sense that it's deeply obedient to Church teachings.

But why isolate Opus Dei in this regard, he asks.

"Every time a new form of life comes along in the Church, it struggles for acceptance," he explains, noting that the Dominicans, Franciscans, and even their historic rival, the Jesuits, followed the same path and "were also the targets of the most outlandish accusations."

"Historically, founders have responded to these slings and arrows with unwavering submission to the papacy, in order to demonstrate that their revolution is intended to serve the Church."

Politics

That Opus Dei, as an institution, meddles with secular politics might be a reckless accusation.

Allen recalls one incident in post-Franco Spain when Escriva refused to throw his group behind a Vatican-sanctioned effort to establish a Christian Democratic Party.

At the forefront was Giovani Benelli, at that time Pope Paul VI's right-hand man, who was wary of a communist takeover in the shaky Spanish political landscape. Escriva's reason was simple: He could not impose a political choice on his members.

In refusing the Vatican project, Escriva risked antagonizing (and he, in fact, did so) "the most powerful man in the Vatican short of the pope himself," Allen points out. Escriva was then still having trouble securing a legal blanket for Opus Dei.

It might also be sheer paranoia to think that Opus Dei is "taking over" the Catholic Church.

As of December 2004, Allen says there were only 20 Opus Dei members working at the Roman Curia, six less than the Jesuits. Only 3.6 percent of policy-making positions, mostly mid-levels, are held by Opus Dei.

There are also only 41 members out of more than 4,000 Catholic bishops worldwide.

Despite all the convincing information, there's no certainty that Allen's "Opus Dei" would finally bring peace to this misunderstood organization. At the very least, it would help put things in proper perspective.

DIEGO Silang, aka DG (Miguel Castro), is a Christ-like figure in Dulaang UP's "Gabriela, An Oratorio."

WEDDING of Gabriela (Lanie Sumalinog) and Diego Silang (Castro) in "Gabriela, An Oratorio."

CONDUCTOR Julian Quirit

A TENSE scene from Dulaang Sibol's "Adarna"

1st quarter 'report card' on the performing arts

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THE MOTHER OF ALL HIGH SCHOOL dramatic clubs—the Ateneo de Manila's Dulaang Sibol, celebrated its 20th anniversary with a rousing musical version of the folk tale "Adarna." The group was founded in 1955 by the legendary Onofre R. Pagsanghan, a dear mentor of yore, and was then known as the Ateneo de Manila High School Dramatics Society. It became Dulang Sibol in 1966 when the group switched to Tagalog (Filipino) as the medium of expression.

The Sibolistas are aged 12-18, write their own songs and play their own music, create their costumes, help backstage and direct themselves, all under the supervision of "Mr. Pagsi," 77, who believes in the formation of character through theater, and who should be a National Artist by now, if there is any justice left in these nominations.

Another indefatigable senior citizen artist is Dr. Rustica C. Carpio of the Far Eastern University President's Committee on Culture, which celebrated the university's 78th founding anniversary with a musical adaptation of "Anastasia," as directed by Zemania Sen Millo.

Playing the enigmatic Anastasia (in a role made famous by Ingrid Bergman) was nursing student Ma. Kristina Saducos, who has beauty-queen looks, and singing and acting ability. Comic actor Gerrynel Velasco was a consistent scene stealer.

UST concert

At the "Tribute to the Thomasians" concert at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, trumpeter Raymond de Leon (playing Haydn's Trumpet Concerto) and the faculty of the University of Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music (interpreting divine arias from Mozart's "Le Nozze de Figaro") made quite an impression on the audience.

Favorite soprano Rachelle Gerodias (now based in Italy for several months for Master Classes with the renowned Mirella Frenni) started cold, gradually warmed up, and then cut loose at the end with a saucy, melting solo aria ("Deh vieni non tardar") that brought the house down.

Despite some misgivings of "purists," the concert of tenor Otoniel Gonzaga and singing star Lea Salonga at the CCP was a success, with the two sharing stellar honors but wisely limiting themselves to one duet ("The Prayer"). The ebullient Julian Quirit conducted the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO).

Two weeks later Gonzaga appeared for free at the Pasig Museum, in what the tenor himself said was a "wonderful, wonderful" concert. The baritone this time was Andrew Fernando who, like baritone Noel Azcona at the CCP, gave a good account of himself. Concert pianist Mary Anne Espina was the collaborating artist at the Pasig concert.

The piece de resistance in the long-running International Bamboo Organ Festival (now on its 31st year) at the Las Piñas Church was Theodore Dubois' "The Seven Last Words." Fast-rising young tenor Jun Peñaverde joined a formidable array of soloists, choirs, organists and a festival orchestra conducted by Eugene Castillo.

The Dubois opus is not your usual solemn Holy Week sermon. It is rousing, lyrical, jolting, in-your-face and, ultimately, achingly beautiful.

Repertory

In the oddly titled "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" by DiPietro & Roberts (a Repertory Philippines musical revue directed by Michael Williams at OnStage, Greenbelt I), four actors—Liesl Catherine Batucan, Cathy Azanza, Robbie Guevara and Niccolo Manahan—maximized their talents and played multiple, challenging roles. Each had his/her big moments.

Luminous Liesl, with her face up close on the video screen, was particularly affecting as a divorcée seeking a new love via the video dating system. This was Repertory acting at its finest!

Another foursome—all actresses this time—(Pinky Marquez, Shamaine Centenera, Lyn Sherman and Niña Romualdez) also demonstrated fine ensemble work, singing, acting and dancing in JJ McColl's "We're Still Hot! The Musical" (at the Teatrino in Greenhills' trendy Promenade until April 8). With female bonding as the theme, the play (directed by Leo Rialp) was often diverting, at times risqué and occasionally poignant.

Alfonso "Coke" Bolipata again proved himself a young master of the violin by tackling the challenging Bartok Violin Concerto No. 2, accompanied by the Metro Manila Community Orchestra under Maestro Chino Toledo, at the CCP. The evening was made doubly significant by the performance of new symphonic works (some rather abstract and intellectualized) of five exciting young composers: Nilo Alcala II, Joel F. Cruz, Gian Mari Andag-Gianon and Earl Francis de Veyra.

Tomescu

The violin is the most romantic of musical instruments. As if to underscore this point, the renowned young violinist from Romania, Alexandru Tomescu, returned to the country late in March for a series of concerts. At the Philam-life Theater in Manila, Tomescu showcased his remarkable style. The piece he interpreted (including "Bayan Ko") was a beloved gem, and was greeted by wild acclaim. Excellent collaboration was provided by pianist Mary Anne Espina.

At the Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero Theater at UP-Diliman, amid the expected clenched fists and flag-waving in "Gabriela, An Oratorio" (by Joi Barrios and Joy Marfil), something unexpected cropped up—tongue-in-cheek humor, satire, and *kabaklaan*. Leads Miguel Castro and Lanie Sumalinog (Germany's "Miss Saigon") performed with verve.

The Dulaang UP musical play was conceived and lovingly directed by Tony Mabesa. It was a successful blending of music (UP Vocal Ensemble), led by Raul Navarro), dance (UP Filipiniana Dance Group led by Von Manalo) and literature (prose and poetry).

At the Emilio Aguinaldo College Yaman Lahi Auditorium in Manila, in a concert presented by Danny Dolor's Tribung Pilipino Foundation, it was vintage Sylvia la Torre all over again, with the US-based soprano still the *kikay*, comedienne and consummate singer. (She is a product of the UST Conservatory of Music.)

"Sylvie's" collaborating artists were pianist Julie Mendoza, another *walang kupas* performer and, once again, our busy tenor Jun Peñaverde, who is leaving for a summer vocal project in Italy in July and who will give a farewell concert on April 8, at the Francisco Santiago Hall, Equitable-PCIB, sponsored by the UST Conservatory of Music.

The CCP's Tanghalang Pilipino has another winner in "Zsa Zsa Zaturnah, the Musical," at times screamingly funny. The cast led by Eula Valdez established instant rapport with the audience, who kept laughing even if the scenes were not that funny. The gay fantasy, based on a comic book, was directed by the ever-competent Chris Millado. But what was most incredible was the ending, in which the hunk courts the gay beautician with red roses. Now, that was really icky, a real fairy tale.

Visiting tenor

Sal Malaki, another celebrated tenor based abroad (with the Los Angeles Opera Company) blew into town for a benefit concert at the CCP, and impressed the audience with his velvet voice, switching easily from opera arias to the Kundiman and Broadway. His rendition of the beautiful Visayan love song "Usahay" (by Nitoy Gonzales) was soulful, the tenor himself being Visayan (from Southern Leyte).

That grand "Piano Virtuosos" concert at the CCP, sponsored by BNP Paribas, was capped by Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," as interpreted by 12 leading pianists and or two best orchestras (the PPO under Eugene Castillo and the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra under Francisco Feliciano). It was mind-blowing!

In the young, strong and confident Jerome Espejo, prima ballerina Lisa Macuja of Ballet Manila has found the ideal premier dansuer to replace the retired Osias Barroso, who now prefers to teach and to choreograph. The chemistry between Macuja and Espejo ("Don Quixote" at the Star Theater) was evident and, during the bravura numbers, sent the audience into transports of excitement.

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Center for Pop Music holds summer program

THE CENTER FOR POP MUSIC PHILIPpines is holding "Starborne," a summer course in voice and stage performance.

Among the alumni of the center are Sarah Geronimo, Rachelle Ann Go, Erik Santos, Nina, Nyoy Volante, King, Jonalyn Viray, Sandara Park, Frenchie Dy and Aiza Marquez.

Founded by Butch Albarracin, the center has branches nationwide. The head office is at 73 Ermin Garcia St., Cubao, QC. Call 7275293, 7210731 or 7210714.

Ballet Manila features Korean performances

BALLET MANILA, UNDER THE artistic direction of Lisa Macuja-Elizalde, will be hosting a two-day performance of the best of Korean classical and contemporary ballet in Star and Aliw Theaters at Star City.

KIM AE Jung, prima ballerina of Korea

Featuring joint performances with the Hwang Kyu Ja Yan Ballet Company of Seoul, South Korea, the festival will include "A Contemporary Ballet Evening" on April 22, 5 p.m., in Star Theater; and "Giselle," a timeless romantic classic, on April 23, 6 p.m., in Aliw Theater.

Korea's finest classical ballet dancers, ballerina Kim Ae Jung and premiere danseur Lee Won Kook, will be featured as the principal dancers in the two-act "Giselle." This is the couple's first performance in Manila after performing the same ballet on the stages of Europe and Northern America.

Opening night will feature three Philippine premieres with Hwang Kyu Ja Yan Ballet's "16" and "1.10.11" by noted Korean choreographer Kim Kyung Young, plus a new ballet by multi-awarded Filipina choreographer Agnes Locsin.

Also featured in the contemporary ballet concert are Ballet Manila international ballet staples such as "Sayao sa Pamlang," "Arachnida" and "Dancing to Verdi."

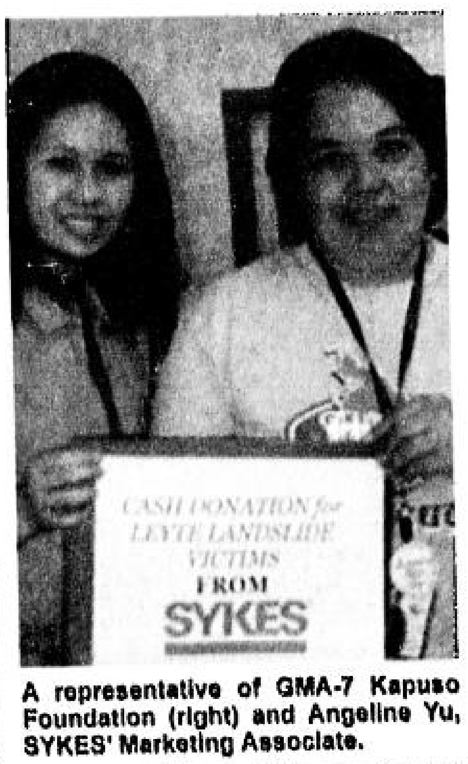
"Following Ballet Manila's successful participation in the Unesco-endorsed Andong International Festival last year, we feel it is just fitting that we host this exceptional company to showcase the strengths of Asians in the art of classical ballet," says Macuja-Elizalde, who is incidentally celebrating her 20th anniversary as the country's prima ballerina later this year.

Tickets are at P400 each on a first-come, first-serve basis. Call 5255967 or 4043086. E-mail info@balletmanila.net

Malenn Amin, SYKES' Sales and Marketing Manager (last row, 2nd from right) with the streetchildren and the SYKES Team.

SYKES' HELPING HAND TO SOCIETY

Sykes Asia, Incorporated, known for being the biggest and the officially recognized pioneer in the Philippines call center industry, is not just another company that revolves its operations around the needs of its clients and customers but also those communities that are in need of assistance. The assistance comes in the form of many active socio-civic partnerships that benefit different sectors of society.



A representative of GMA-7 Kapuso Foundation (right) and Angeline Yu, SYKES' Marketing Associate.

The first of these efforts is their "Give a Gift, Help a Child Program," which is on its 4th year. This program benefits the Unang Hakbang Foundation, Alay Pag-asa, Sarnelli Center, Kuya Center, White Cross, Sun for All Children, and Tahanan Outreach all of whom are overjoyed and touched by the kindness of SYKES. Donations of clothing, toys, school supplies and books are pooled in from each of the four Manila centers. Sponsored by SYKES, Jollibee hosted the turnover ceremony cum Christmas Party with the street children last December 22, 2005.

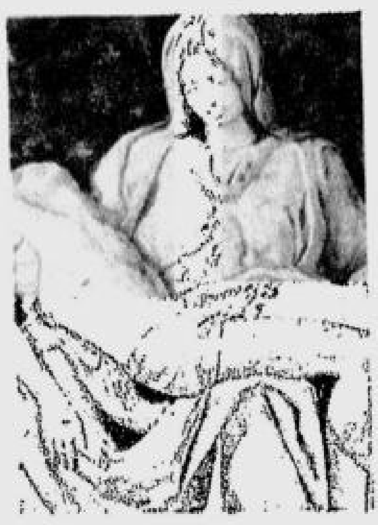
The heads of the benefiting organizations are quick to mention which "SYKES is the only call center that understands the needs and has continuously supported the well-being of street children...we are sincerely grateful that these children have benefited from this cause."

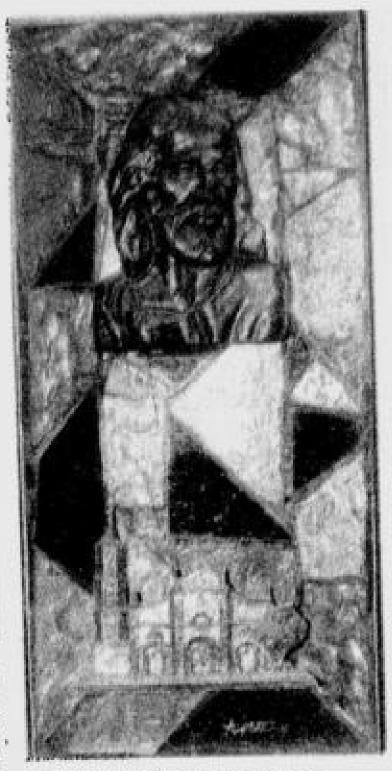
SYKES is also cognizant of the immediate needs required from sudden calamities. The recent Leyte tragedy left with it an astounding death toll and many helpless survivors. This was another cause which SYKES lent its support to. Donations in cash, clothes, medicine, canned and packaged food and other items were turned over to the GMA Kapuso Foundation and the ABS-CBN Foundation Inc. The donations were obtained through the generous efforts of the employees. Representatives from the Marketing Team turned the collected donation over to the said foundations.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Folk religiosity permeates mall culture

By Constantino C. Tejero


"PIETA"


GRANDEUR in a small scale

FOLK CATHOLICISM IS A major component of our culture. While in past Lenten season it was relegated to provincial towns and city-street barangays, now it is finding its way in the malls.

Certain artists like Fernando Sena seem to have made it their annual devotion to hold Lenten exhibits in mall galleries and hotel lobbies. Some of these images aspire to the religious rapture of the Baroque and the High Renaissance, while many approximate the religious innocence of the Italian primitives.

Even Greenbelt 3 at Ayala Center in Makati City has been swept by religious fervor and screened in MyCinema three days ago the documentary "The Gospel of Judas," an episode in National Geographic Channel's exclusive Secret Bible Week program.

In the Artwalk, 4/L, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, three ongoing thematic exhibits offer religious imagery and Christian iconography: "Behold," 55 pieces by 55 artists in Gallery Nine until Easter, April 16; "Diboto," eight pieces in acrylic on canvas by Mikel Parial, also until April 16 in The Big & Small Art Co.; "Semana Santa," 37 paintings and sculptures by Al Perez, until April 22 in Purple Art Gallery.

Four exhibits, actually, if we include "Fish-ful of Prosperity," Julius Limpe's acrylic pieces of fishes (fish being the symbol of Christ) in Crucible Gallery, also until Easter Sunday.

Perez's is a major show, as it reveals a new direction and a hitherto unknown aspect of his art-making. Aside from paintings, the artist is exhibiting for the first time his acrylic collages and relief sculptures.

The paintings are in acrylic, watercolor or mixed media on paper, while the collages are of handmade grass paper washed with acrylic. The sculptural pieces are in marble, paper, wood, resin, brass or plaster. He has done 12 such reliefs, seven of them displayed in the exhibit.

Holy visages

A graduate of Fine Arts, major in Painting, from University of Santo Tomas, Perez is known in the Philippine art world for his photorealist renditions of colonial churches, specifically their elaborately decorated façades. His fascination for these old churches he attributes to the religious devotion of his grandmother, with whom he lived when a child in Hagonoy, Bulacan.

"You know how *lolas* were in those days—*mga manang*," recalls the artist. "When she went to church she always tugged me along. *Tangay-tangay ako noon, e.* So when I did my first drawing at 6, it was of a church."

Perez's art-making isn't just some virtuoso performance, as it really has a religious dimension to it. He relates that when he was 3 he had a convulsion, so his grandmother took him to Sta. Elena Church and offered him for safekeeping to the saint, praying: *"Buhayin n'yo 'to, magse-serbisyo sa 'yo 'to."*

Since then, for thanksgiving, the recovered boy was made to carry the image of Sta. Elena during the procession at her May 4 fiesta. Now at 58, Perez is still doing it, and he even spends for her new dress every year. That's why in this exhibit there is an image of the artist's patroness, St. Helena.

The exhibit's subtitle "Churches and Saints" is a misnomer, as, aside from the churches, there are only two saints here, the other being St. Therese. There are some angels, God the Father, while the rest are the numerous apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary and various images of Christ.

These holy visages are easily recognizable to the Catholic faithful as they are popular images from old paintings and *estampitas*, icons and statuary. Here is a flesh-toned acrylic collage of Michelangelo's "Pieta" framed by wooden shutters to look like an altarpiece; two such versions of the Byzantine ikon of the Mother of Perpetual Help; three versions of the impression of the Holy Shroud of Turin; three of the Santo Niño; two of the Sacred Heart; two of the Virgin of Guadalupe; Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Antipolo, the Fatima, the Crucifixion, the Last Supper, the Black Nazarene, even the Ati-atihan.

Ancient churches

These are done mostly in highly textured paper the artist bought in Japan, which gives the impression of old age, of craquelure, of the paint film fading or peeling off. The images are rendered in brilliant coloration influenced by the sunlight-filled tonalities of Perez's favorite Filipino artists, José Joya and Fernando Amorsolo.

"Patay na patay ako sa kulay ni Joya," he raves. "I also admire the way he handles paper collage." Of Amorsolo, he loves the master's rendering of anatomy, the famous sunlight, the expert impressionism.

Thus, there's only one dark-toned monochrome in this exhibit, the third version of the Holy Shroud, in black and gray streaked with gold. The other two are rendered colorful so that they look like Pop Art or solarized version of the original.

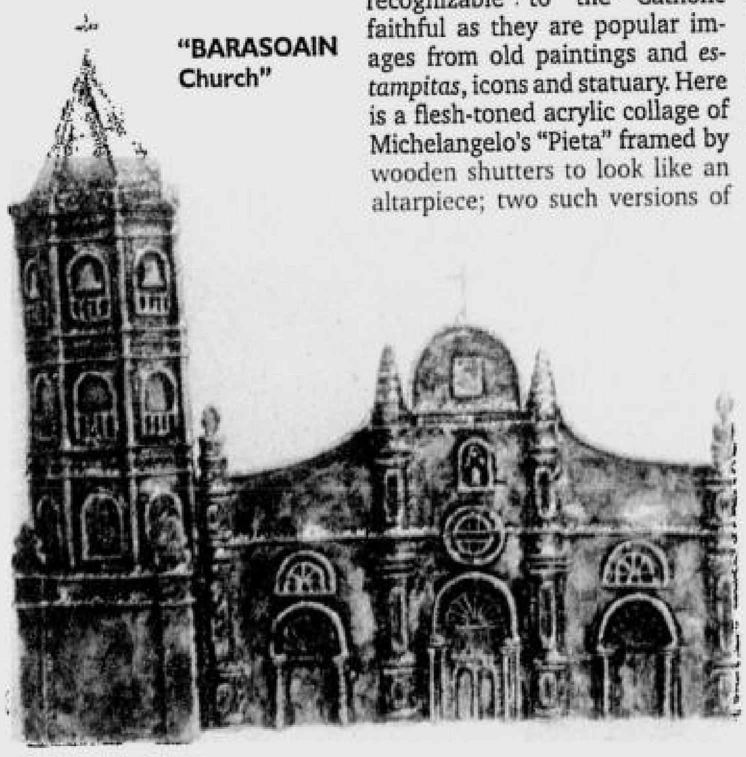
Here, too, are his familiar bravura renditions of the façades of the churches of Barasoain, Paoay, Miag-ao, the San Agustin Church, the Manila Cathedral (a subtle monochromatic wash of gold).

The more notable, however, are the sculptural pieces, as they're new in his art-making but already look skillful in various mediums. The image of Paoay Church is basso relievo in two versions, in white marble and in brown *batikuling*. "The Last Supper" is also low relief but in plaster of Paris.

"Barasoain Church" and "Miag-ao Church" are paper sculptures in high relief, each in seven layers of cardboard cutouts. Also high relief is a brass rendition of Barasoain Church, in reddish-brown metal on cream-colored background.

The most remarkable is a high relief of brass images of Christ and Barasoain Church fixed on crazy-cut patterns of mirror and resin colored amber, black and gold. It looks like a small stained-glass window.

Perez's recording of churches is noted for its fineness of detail, which he ascribes to his admiration for the works of Canaletto and Andrew Wyeth. If these ancient monuments were razed down by fire or earthquake tomorrow, they can probably be put back together stone by stone from his paintings and drawings.


"BARASOAIN Church"

Top print artists in major show

THE PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF PRINTmakers (PAP), the national organization of renowned artists/printmakers headed by abstractionist Raul G. Isidro, is showing "Restrike 3" at the Art Center, 4/F, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong. The show is co-sponsored by Crucible Gallery in cooperation with the ArtPetron Foundation.

The exhibit showcases a collection of fine prints by National Artists Arturo Luz and J. Elizalde Navarro, PAP founder Manuel Rodriguez Sr., Isidro, Bencab, Pandy Aviado, Fil Delacruz, Manuel Baldemor, Santi Bose, Ross Capili, Ojeng Jocano, Ibarra de la Rosa Mars Galang, Bing del Rosano, Mario Parial, Mikel Parial, Ofelia Gelvezon-Tequi, Benjie Carbrera, Rey Concepcion, Restituto Embuscado, D. Lodronio, Ileana Lee, Jesus Flores, Ambie Abaño, Danny Sola, Bernard Temporosa, Florence Cinco, Emeterio Valente, Armando Toleza, Chris Bayani, Gerry Navilon and Ronald Ventura.

The artworks are in woodcut, lithograph, serigraph, etching and mixed media.

"Restrike 3" runs until April 16. Call 6356061.

Sansó, Lydia Velasco in Sotheby's auction

WORKS BY NINE FILIPINO artists are featured in the Easter Sunday auction of Southeast Asian paintings by Sotheby's at The Regent Hotel in Singapore.

Of the 206 lots, 16 lots are from Filipino artists: six Fernando Amorsolos, three Romeo Tabuenas, two Arturo Luzes, one Pacita Abad, one Marcel Antonio, one E.L. Cordova, one Lydia Velasco and one Sansó.

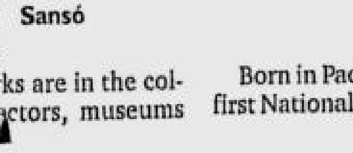
Sansó's works are two paintings, "Like Jade Jewels" and "The Jade Vase," which have been combined into one lot.

The latest addition in Sotheby's growing roster of Filipino artists, Velasco's work is the 48" x 28" piece titled "Flower Vendors," which has been included in the section Contemporary Paintings.

Sotheby's started including Filipino paintings in their auctions in Singapore eight years ago. One of the banner years for Filipino paintings was in October 2004 when 32 of the 183 paintings sold were done by Filipino artists, generating sales of over S$1.3 million or P43.6 million at 2004 exchange rates.

Last October, in Sotheby's 20th anniversary auction at the Fullerton Hotel, 19 works of 11 Filipino artists were featured.

Sansó was born in Catalunia, Spain, and arrived in the Philippines at the age of 4 in 1933. He studied at University of the Philippines, University of Santo Tomas, and went on to pursue his studies at Academia di Bellas Artes in Rome and at Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux Arts in Paris. His works are in the collection of key private collectors, museums and galleries worldwide.


"THE JADE Vase," by Juvenal Sansó

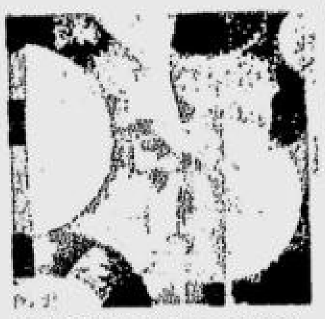
Luz was bestowed the National Artist Award for Painting in 1997. He had received a scholarship to study at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland and, in 1950, moved to New York and pursued further studies at the Brooklyn Museum Art School.

Velasco majored in Advertising at UST's then College of Architecture and Fine Arts and joined advertising in the 1960s where she worked with HR Ocampo and Cesar Legazpi, who later became National Artists. She went full-time into painting in 1992.

Born in Paco in 1892, Amorsolo became the first National Artist.

VISUAL ARTS

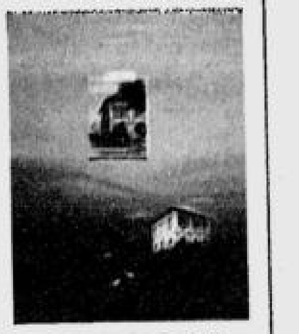
Saturday Group exhibit


"CURVES of Summer II," by Frank Caña

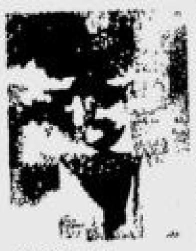
The Saturday Group holds an exhibit in West Gallery (West Avenue, QC), April 11-29, of 16" x 16" works. Participating artists are Malang, Cris Cruz, Lydia Velasco, Buds Convocar, Shiela Tiangco, Frank Caña, Anna de Leon, Ernie Patricio, Bing Siochi, Nanding Saña, Jericho Blanco, Aner Sebastian, Marcelo Baldomar, Carlo Ongchangco, Boy Valino, Vic Bachoco, Andy "Abu" Urang, Roel Obemio, Mhara Cruz, Keith Paras, Inna Vitaza, Myra Caymar, Ding Hidalgo, Alpha Larracas, Roland Santos, Tess Picaña, Max Sumulong, Jo Madarang, Bob Estolas and Amb. Gonzales. West Gallery is at 48 West Ave., QC. Call 4110336/9221.

Top artists in Bacolod

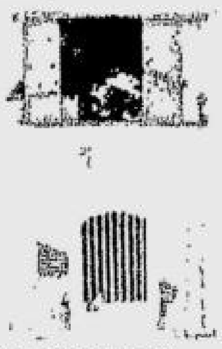
Artes Figuras Art Gallery (Piazza Sorrento, 13 Lacson St., Bacolod City) holds a group art exhibition, "Images," featuring the recent works of Manila artists Emmanuel Garibay, Buds Convocar, Lawrence Borsoto, Jojo Austria, CJ Tañedo, Sam Penaso, Lindslee and Iggy Rodriguez. Negrense artists Nunelucio Alvarado, Ernie Claud and Jojo Montinola also participate. It runs until April 23. Call 7266543 (Manila), 4334051 (Bacolod) or 0917-8115399.


"PHOTOGRAPHS and Memories," by Fidel Sarmiento

Sarmiento, Kim in Korea


"FLOW," by Eun Ok Kim

Art Association of the Philippines president Fidel Sarmiento and Korean artist Kim Eun-Ok are holding a back-to-back exhibit, "Two Colors in Korea." Sarmiento showcases acrylic works while Kim presents her mastery in watercolor. They present diverse modes of conception, each work with a different genesis and bent. They consciously use striking colors in a collection that, though easy on the eyes, is nonetheless replete with both artists' mastery of their craft. The exhibit runs April 12-18 in Gallery Soo Yong Hwa, 2/F, 18 Kwan Hoon-Dong, Jong Ro-Ku, Seoul, Korea.


"NOSTALGIA," by Roland Santos

Metro holds sale

On its 14th anniversary, the Metro Gallery (455 P. Guevarra St., San Juan, MM) is holding the Art Festival Sale Madness featuring the works of Jerry Elizalde Navarro, Nena Saguil, Romeo Tabuena, Solomon Saprid, Bencab, Ed Castrillo, Loreto Racuya, Oscar Salita, Nemi Miranda, Philipp Badon, Ferdinand Montemayor, Marcel Antonio and more. Book pieces of Jun Martinez, Greg Bolaños, Elmer Gernale, Nick Masangcay, Roland Santos, Fred Ramirez will also be on sale. Call 7266543 or 0927-5335170.

Badon in Hong Kong

Philipp Badon opens his 27th one-man show, "Language of the Universe," April 24, 7 p.m., in V-13 Vodka Bar and Gallery, G/F 13, Old Bailey St., Soho, Central Hong Kong.

'Scenic Views'

Galeria de las Islas presents its latest exhibit "Scenic Views" at Ilustrado Restaurant, Intramuros. The exhibit is a carefully selected collection of landscape and rural scape paintings in a different variety of styles and perspectives. Works of Domeng Labordo, Nik Masangcay Jr., Antonio Doctor Garcia, Ed Nanquil, Rafael "Jun" Concepcion and Leon Pacunayen are included. Ongoing until June 30. Call 5272113.

Three shows at Pintô

Pintô Art Gallery holds three simultaneous solo shows and a special exhibit of works from its permanent collection. On view until May 1 are works by tile artist Bart Aguas, painter Noel Mahilum and sculptor Ulysses Veloso. "Art on Earth" showcases Aguas' unique works of Filipiniana-inspired paintings on tiles. Mahilum's "Batu-Bato" makes use of the illusionistic image of stones as subjects themselves, while Veloso's "Muse of the Spheres" presents his series of witty sculptures. His use of egg shapes for his work conveys the idea of the organic world of permanent change. The collection features Elmer Borlongan's early work from his first one-man show in 1993 and selected works from succeeding exhibits. Call 6971015.

Penaso at Frio Mixx

Bohol-born painter and performance artist Samuel Penaso is holding a show of works on paper at Frio Mixx Shangri-La Art Space, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong. The collection of free-hand painterly sketches and portraits of women is characterized by loose and brightly hued brushstrokes to accentuate the features of hardy yet feminine beauty. Show runs until April 30. Call 6327921.

Summer art workshop

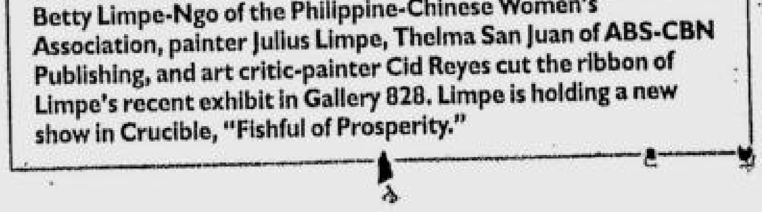
E.R. Tagle will hold a summer art workshop starting April 22 at the function room of Jollibee-Makati Cinema Square and at Walter Mart Makati, both at Chino Roces Avenue, Makati. Children (3-12 years old) and adults (13 up) will be introduced to the use of pencil, charcoal, watercolor, oil pastel and mixed media. There are seven lessons. Tuition is P4,500 for children and P5,500 for adults. Call 8112432 or 09275522288.

Photo workshop

The Alcove will hold an advanced lighting course titled "Lighting for Portrait Photography" by Jay Alonzo on April 22-23, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., at the Filipinas Heritage Library, Ayala Triangle, Makati Avenue, Makati. Call 8921801 for details.

Workshops at Ayala Museum

Ayala Museum presents "A Day with an Artist" workshop on April 22-29. Fernando Sena will open the workshop on still life on April 22. Alex Chan Lim and Felix Chan Lim will give a workshop on basic Chinese painting on April 29. Call 7577117 to 21 local 28 or visit website at www.ayalamuseum.com.


ARCHITECT Johnny Hubilla, publicist Louie Cruz, Lucy Limpe, Betty Limpe-Ngo of the Philippine-Chinese Women's Association, painter Julius Limpe, Thelma San Juan of ABS-CBN Publishing, and art critic-painter Cid Reyes cut the ribbon of Limpe's recent exhibit in Gallery 828. Limpe is holding a new show in Crucible, "Fishful of Prosperity."